

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

<b>Date:</b> Wednesday 15th April, 2026
<b>Time:</b> 4.30 pm
<b>Venue:</b> Mandela Room (Municipal Buildings)

### AGENDA

1. Welcome and Fire Evacuation Procedure

*In the event the fire alarm sounds attendees will be advised to evacuate the building via the nearest fire exit and assemble at the Bottle of Notes opposite MIMA.*

2. Apologies for Absence

*To receive any apologies for absence.*

3. Declarations of Interest

*To receive any declarations of interest.*

4. Minutes - Overview and Scrutiny Board - 18 March 2026

5 - 10

*To receive the minutes of the previous meeting.*

5. Scrutiny Chairs Update

*To receive updates from Scrutiny Panel Chairs.*

6. Executive Forward Work Programme

11 - 24

*To consider forthcoming Executive Decisions.*

- 6.1 Forward Plan Actions Progress

*To provide Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on outstanding forward plan actions arising from the previous meeting.*

- *Update on the Neighbourhoods Model*

7. Final Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (Short Review) - The Council's Approach to Poverty 25 - 30

*To receive the Board's Final Short Review Report into the Council's Approach to Poverty.*

8. Draft Terms of Reference - OSB Short Review - What role do Faith and Belief Groups play in Civic Life in Middlesbrough

*To consider draft Terms of Reference for the Board's Short Review.*

9. Continuous Improvement Plan – Progress Update 31 - 88

*The Mayor will be in attendance to provide the Board with an update on the Council's Continuous Improvement Plan.*

*The reports attached for OSB's consideration were considered and approved by Executive at its meeting of 3 March 2026.*

10. Executive Member Update - The Mayor To Follow

*The Mayor will be in attendance to provide an update on his portfolio.*

11. Executive Member Update - Neighbourhoods

*The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods will be in attendance to provide an update on his portfolio.*

12. Any other urgent items which, in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered.

Charlotte Benjamin  
Director of Legal and Governance Services

Town Hall  
Middlesbrough  
Tuesday 7 April 2026

## MEMBERSHIP

Councillors L Young (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), D Branson, E Clynch, D Coupe, J Kabuye, L Lewis, T Mohan, I Morrish, J Platt, M Saunders, Z Uddin, G Wilson and J Young

### **Assistance in accessing information**

**Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Scott Bonner/ Rachael Johansson, 01642 729708/ 01642 726421, [scott\\_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:scott_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk)/[rachael\\_johansson@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:rachael_johansson@middlesbrough.gov.uk)**

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This document was classified as: OFFICIAL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Wednesday 18 March 2026.

**PRESENT:** Councillors L Young (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), D Branson, E Clynch, D Coupe, J Kabuye, T Mohan, J Platt, Z Uddin, G Wilson and J Young

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors P Gavigan

**OFFICERS:** C Benjamin, S Bonner, E Scollay, G Field and R Johansson

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors L Lewis, I Morrish, M Saunders and B Hubbard

### 25/70 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

### 25/71 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 25 FEBRUARY 2026**

A Member identified several typographical amendments to the minutes, and it was agreed the Democratic Services Officer would amend them as described.

Notwithstanding the changes identified, the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 25 February 2026 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

### 25/72 **EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board received an update on the Executive Forward Work Programme. Members were advised that the system used to publish the Executive Forward Work Programme was currently being updated and, as a result, an up-to-date version was not available. It was noted that the version available online contained outdated information and would be republished once the system update was complete.

Members discussed the current version for the Forward Plan and commented on the timing of items within the programme, including the rolling nature of updates and the lack of confirmed dates for some Executive decisions. It was noted that items were added as they were agreed, which limited the ability of the Board to plan its work effectively.

Members emphasised the importance of forward visibility to support the Board's overview and scrutiny function, particularly in relation to key areas such as budget setting. It was suggested that earlier engagement with senior officers, including the Chief Executive, would assist Members in understanding forthcoming issues.

Members quired if any further information was available relating to the Forward Plan item 'Update on the Neighborhoods model'.

**ORDERED** that OSB be provided with an update on the following items listed on the Forward Plan:

- Update on the Neighborhoods Model.

### 25/73 **SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE**

The Chair invited Scrutiny Panel Chairs to provide an update.

The Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Panel provided an update following the Panel's meeting held on 9 March 2026. The update included information on recent Ofsted focused visits and forthcoming Ofsted inspection. Members were advised that Children's Services was preparing

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for inspection, including work relating to children missing in education. It was noted that the schools bill was up to date and that several working groups had been established, including those relating to social care and placements. The next meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Panel is scheduled to take place on 20 April 2026.

The Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel provided an update following the Panel's meeting held on 23 February 2026. The update included work relating to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Members received a presentation from the Policy, Partnership and Delivery Manager of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on the perpetrator strategy. Council's Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead also provided an update on work to acquire White Ribbon accreditation, with further evidence being gathered. It was noted that the Director of Public Health would present the annual public health report at the next Panel meeting. The next meeting of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel is scheduled to take place on 13 April 2026.

The Chair of the Place Scrutiny Panel provided an update following the Panel's meeting held on 16 February 2026. The update included consideration of flood risk management issues and changes to national flood risk arrangements. Members also received information relating to investigatory powers. It was noted that the Panel's final report on Barriers to Regeneration had been completed and recommendations proposed in the report. Discussion also took place regarding potential areas for future topics, including housing provision and Middlesbrough's bicentenary in 2030.

#### **NOTED.**

#### **CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 4.8.25 the Chair proposed a motion without notice, which was seconded and agreed, to change the order of business. The motion proposed that Agenda Item 8 Final Report of the Place Scrutiny Panel – Barriers to Regeneration be heard next. It was agreed that the order of business for the remainder of the meeting be items 8, 9, 6a, 7 and 10.

25/74

#### **FINAL REPORT OF PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - BARRIERS TO REGENERATION**

The Board received the final report of the Place Scrutiny Panel on Barriers to Regeneration.

The report outlined the findings of the scrutiny review, which sought to identify the key barriers to regeneration in Middlesbrough and explore how the town could attract more businesses and investment.

Members were advised that the review had considered a range of factors impacting regeneration, including changes to retail environment, vacancy rates, transport and accessibility, crime and perceptions of safety, and wider economic conditions. The report also highlighted examples of good practice from other local authorities, and the importance of diversifying town centre uses to support long-term sustainability.

The Board heard that key issues affecting regeneration included the perception of anti-social behaviour and crime, levels of vacant properties, reduced footfall, and broader economic pressures. It was also noted that stakeholders had identified the need to improve the physical environment, increase safety and security, and support a more diverse and vibrant town centre offer.

Members were advised that the Panel had made several recommendations to the Executive, including proposals to promote Middlesbrough more positively, increase events and cultural activity, improve safety and security, enhance the physical environment, strengthen transport links, and work in partnerships with key stakeholders.

During discussion, Members noted the importance of attracting more businesses and increasing activity within Middlesbrough town centre. The need to diversify the use of town centre spaces was highlighted, including encouraging leisure, entertainment and cultural uses to increase footfall. Members also discussed the role of events and seasonal activities in drawing people into the town centre and improving perceptions of safety.

18 March 2026

In addition, Members emphasised the importance of improving perceptions of the town, particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour, cleanliness and the general environment, and noted the need for a more proactive approach to addressing the visible signs of decline. The potential for areas such as Linthorpe Road to be better utilised to support a more concentrated and vibrant town centre offer was also discussed, alongside opportunities to encourage healthier and more active uses of the town centre, including walking and cycling initiatives.

Members welcomed the report and noted its findings.

**AGREED:**

1. The final report and its recommendations be endorsed.
2. The report be referred to the Executive for consideration.

25/75

**FINAL REPORT OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL - HEALTHY PLACE MAKING**

The Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel presented the final report on Healthy Placemaking, which focused on addressing childhood obesity in Middlesbrough.

The report outlined that childhood obesity remains a significant public health challenge in Middlesbrough, with rates above regional and national averages and strongly linked to deprivation. It highlighted the importance of adopting a whole-system approach, recognising the role of the built environment, planning, transport, education and public health in shaping health outcomes.

The Panel's findings emphasised the need for strong partnership working Council services and with external organisations, alongside embedding health considerations into policy, planning and decision-making processes. The report also highlighted the role of initiatives such as active travel, access to green space, and the management of the hot food takeaway environment in supporting healthier lifestyles.

Members were advised that the Panel had made several recommendations to the Executive, including proposals to strengthen governance arrangements, embed health considerations within planning and policy development, increase the use of Health Impact Assessments, promote active travel and access to green space, and address environmental factors such as the concentration of hot food takeaway premises.

Members highlighted the importance of encouraging physical activity among children and young people, including through schools and opportunities before and after the school day, with examples of informal activity such as children playing football.

Members queried the presentation of data within the report, including ward-level information, and confirmed that this did not affect the overall findings or recommendations, and that the report could progress to the Executive. It was agreed that clarification from the service area would be sought and circulated to the Board.

Barriers to active travel were also raised, including the condition of pavements, environmental factors such as litter and dog fouling, and school travel patterns. It was noted that where children do not attend the nearest school, there may be increased reliance on car travel.

Wider transport considerations were also highlighted, including limited bus provision and the impact this may have on travel choices, as well as the need to support walking and cycling as viable alternatives.

Members welcomed the report and noted its findings.

**AGREED:**

1. The final report and its recommendations be endorsed.
2. The report be referred to the Executive for consideration.

25/76

**FORWARD PLAN ACTIONS PROGRESS**

The Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture provided an update on outstanding forward plan actions, specifically in relation to Pest Control Services and Bereavement Services.

In respect of Pest Control Services, Members were advised that the work had been undertaken to implement a revised pest control service. It was noted that appropriate systems and staffing arrangements were being delivered to support delivery of the service.

In respect of Bereavement Services, Members were advised that a strategy was in development, with some actions currently outstanding. It was noted that the service operates across several sites, including those affected by flooding, and that improvements to existing systems were required. Officers also highlighted capacity challenges and confirmed that work was ongoing within existing budgets to progress the service. Reference was made to current cremator provision and the need to consider future requirements.

**NOTED.**

25/77

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE - ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability was in attendance and provided an update on the service areas.

In respect of Bereavement Services, Members were advised that work on the extension to Thorntree Cemetery would commence shortly. As part of this, the existing drainage system was being assessed, and any required works would be undertaken. Burials would continue as normal during that period, with appropriate communications issued to families and Members. Longer-term options for burial provision continued to be explored, and feasibility study at Acklam Cemetery regarding cremators and land use was due to commence.

In relation to Waste Services, it was reported that deliveries of food waste bins, caddies and recycling bins had begun and had generally been positively received by residents. The delivery programme was progressing in line with the published timeline, supported by communications including emails, bin tagging and online information. Residents were also able to sign up for collection reminders.

Members discussed several operational aspects of the service, including the distribution and use of food waste caddies, communication with residents, and arrangements for collection. Clarification was provided regarding the phased rollout of the service, current collection arrangements, and ongoing work to support resident understanding and participation, including engagement activity and educational communications. It was also noted that recruitment and resourcing arrangements were in progress to support the service.

In respect of Alleyway Maintenance and Environmental Services, Members were advised that a programme of works was in place including regular baiting, cleansing, and periodic deep cleans. It was noted that enforcement action was taken where issues such as fly tipping occurred. Members discussed the effectiveness of current arrangements, including cleansing schedules, resource levels, and opportunities to strengthen enforcement activity.

The Board also received an update on transport and infrastructure projects, including schemes within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. This included updates on cycleway proposals, bus and pedestrian improvements, and ongoing design and consultation activity. Members raised queries regarding specific schemes, including their impact on traffic, consultation processes, and future planning considerations. It was noted that further reports would be brought forward in due course.

An update was also provided on the Transporter Bridge, including progress on structural assessment, design work, and funding considerations. Members discussed the future use of the bridge, associated constraints, and indicative timelines for delivery. It was noted that further details would be presented as proposals progressed.

In respect of Highways, Members were advised of progress within the Council's capital programme, including footway and carriageway works, crossing improvements, and drainage

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activity. Discussion included maintenance approaches, prioritisation of works, and resource considerations, including the balance between reactive and planned maintenance. Members also raised issues relating to flooding, gullies and general infrastructure maintenance within their wards, and Officers advised that works were being prioritised based on need and available resources.

**NOTED.**

25/78

**ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

The Chair advised the Board that a survey was due to be circulated to all Members seeking their views on how scrutiny was operating and encouraged all Members to complete the survey when it was available.

The Chair reminded the Board that consultation was open for the 2026/27 scrutiny work programme and encouraged all Members to submit any recommendations they may have.

In pursuance of the Board's short review into poverty, the Board was encouraged to consider recommendations following the evidence received.

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**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**

<b>Report of:</b>	Chief Executive – Erik Scollay
<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Submitted to:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Board
<b>Date:</b>	15 April 2026
<b>Title:</b>	Executive Forward Plan
<b>Report for:</b>	Discussion
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	Delivering Best Value
<b>Key decision:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Why:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Subject to call in?</b>	Not applicable
<b>Why:</b>	Not applicable

**Proposed decision(s)**

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider and Notes the content of the Executive Forward Work Programme.

**Executive summary**

OSB has delegated powers to manage the work of Scrutiny and, if appropriate, it can either undertake the work itself or delegate to individual Scrutiny Panels.

One of the main duties of OSB is to hold the Executive to account by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive and decide whether value can be added by Scrutiny considering the matter in advance of any decision being made.

This would not negate a Non-Executive Member's ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.

**1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions**

1.1 To make OSB aware of items on the Executive Forward Work Programme.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	All aims and ambitions will be contained in individual decisions.
A healthy Place	
Safe and resilient communities	
Delivering best value	

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Board

- Consider and note the content of the Executive Forward Work Programme.

**3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

3.1 OSB has delegated powers to manage the work of Scrutiny and, if appropriate, it can either undertake the work itself or delegate to individual Scrutiny Panels.

3.2 One of the main duties of OSB is to hold the Executive to account by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive and decide whether value can be added by Scrutiny considering the matter in advance of any decision being made.

3.3 This would not negate a Non-Executive Member’s ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.

**4. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate**

4.1 Not applicable

**5. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended**

5.1 No other options are submitted as part of the report.

**6. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)**

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Relevant Impact will be detailed in individual decisions.
Legal	
Risk	

Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	
Reducing Poverty	
Climate Change / Environmental	
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	
Data Protection	

**Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)**

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Implement any decision of the Overview and Scrutiny Board with regard to the Executive Forward Work Plan.	Relevant Officer	As directed by OSB

**Appendices**

1	Executive Forward Work Plan
2	
3	

**Background papers**

Body	Report title	Date

**Contact:** Scott Bonner/ Rachael Johansson  
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[rachael\\_johansson@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:rachael_johansson@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

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## Executive Forward Plan - 1 April 2025 to 31 May 2026

FOR THE PERIOD 7 APRIL 2026 TO 31 MAY 2026

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
<b>The Mayor</b>						
I025419	Performance and Financial Management Policy and Project Management Policy Review To refresh the Council's approach to Performance Management following the refresh of the Council Plan report considered by Executive in March 2026	Executive 8 Apr 2026		Public		1) The Mayor <i>Chief Executive</i>
<b>Executive Member - Children's Services</b>						
I025997	EXEMPT - Fostering Regional Collaboration	Executive 6 May 2026	KEY	Fully exempt		4) Executive Member for Children's Services

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
All Wards	To advise Executive of proposed DfE reform in relation to regional collaboration.		Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	<i>Confidential sensitive information regarding staff.</i>		<i>Corporate Director of Children's Services</i>
<b>Executive Member - Development</b>						
1025559 Brambles and Thorntrees; Central; Park End and Beckfield	Pride in Place Programme - Thorntree and Park End and Impact Fund To seek Exec approval to accept accountable body status for the pride in place funds	Executive 8 Apr 2026	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings above £250,000 and will affect 2 or more wards	Public		5) Executive Member for Development, 8) Executive Member for Neighbourhoods <i>Corporate Director of Regeneration and Housing</i>
1025151 Central	Town Centre Future Development To propose a formal legal partnership to assist in the future development of Middlesbrough Town Centre	Executive 6 May 2026	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings that are above the threshold decided by the Council i.e. Over £150,000	Public		5) Executive Member for Development <i>Corporate Director of Regeneration and Housing</i>
1025998 All Wards	Scrutiny Response - Barriers to Regeneration To seek approval for actions proposed in response to the recent	Executive 10 Jun 2026		Public		5) Executive Member for Development <i>Corporate Director of Regeneration and Housing</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
	scrutiny review regarding barriers to regeneration					
<b>Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability</b>						
I025373 All Wards	Residential Pest Control Service To implement a new residential pest control service	Executive 8 Apr 2026	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		6) Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability <i>Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture</i>
I025518 All Wards	2026/27 Transport & Infrastructure Capital Programme To seek approval of the proposed 2026/27 Transport & Infrastructure Capital Programme, setting out planned investment, funding sources, and delivery priorities to support the Council's strategic objectives.	Executive 8 Apr 2026	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings above £250,000 and will affect 2 or more wards	Public		6) Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability <i>Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture</i>
I025819	Members Small Scheme Allocations That the Executive Sub-Committee for property approves the eligible Members Small Scheme project allocations, following applications from Members, and assessment	Executive 8 Apr 2026		Public		7) Executive Member for Finance <i>Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
	by Council Officers:  APPROVES the allocation of funding to deliver the approved projects.					
1025152 All Wards	Bereavement Services Strategy To approve the bereavement strategy, which outlines the steps to improve the service	Executive 11 Jun 2026	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		6) Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability <i>Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture</i>
1025816 All Wards	Cost reduction of Garden Waste For Exec to review the cost of the Garden Waste subscription to be reduced	Executive 24 Jul 2026	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		6) Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability <i>Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture</i>
1025817	Commercial Waste Collection and Disposal For Exec to approve the requirement for commercial waste collections and disposal from council buildings to be contracted out.  No ward affected as this is internal buildings	Executive 24 Jul 2026	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings that are above the threshold decided by the Council i.e. Over £150,000	Public		6) Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability <i>Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
<b>Executive Member - Finance</b>						
I025999 All Wards	Exceptional Hardship Fund - Section 13A (1) (a) Policy To approve the proposed Exceptional Hardship Fund - Section 13A (1) (a) Policy	Executive 6 May 2026	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings above £250,000 and will affect 2 or more wards	Public		7) Executive Member for Finance <i>Corporate Director of Finance</i>
I025507 All Wards	Crisis Resilience Fund To approve the proposed delivery plan for the Crisis Resilience Fund grant	Executive 10 Jun 2026	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings above £250,000 and will affect 2 or more wards	Public		7) Executive Member for Finance <i>Corporate Director of Finance</i>
I025506 All Wards	Special Guardianship Policy To approve the proposed Special Guardianship Policy	Executive 10 Jun 2026	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings above £250,000 and will affect 2 or more wards	Public		4) Executive Member for Children's Services, 7) Executive Member for Finance <i>Corporate Director of Finance</i>
I024705 All Wards	2025/26 Revenue and Capital Year-end Outturn The report advises the Executive of the Council's year-end financial outturn position for 2025/26	Executive 10 Jun 2026	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings above £250,000 and will affect 2 or more wards	Public		7) Executive Member for Finance <i>Corporate Director of Finance</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
I025612 All Wards	Corporate Food Poverty Policy To approve the Corporate Food Poverty policy	Executive 8 Jul 2026	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		7) Executive Member for Finance <i>Corporate Director of Finance</i>
<b>Executive Member - Neighbourhoods</b>						
I025535 All Wards	Update on implementing the Neighbourhoods Model This report is for information and is intended to provide an update on the progress being made on the neighbourhood plans which is part of the neighbourhood model.	Executive 8 Apr 2026		Public		8) Executive Member for Neighbourhoods <i>Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture</i>
I025536 All Wards	Response to OSB Community Cohesion Report 2026 To provide an overview of the recommendations within the OSB report and the proposed actions that the service area have put forward in order to meet the recommendations	Executive 8 Apr 2026	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		8) Executive Member for Neighbourhoods <i>Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture</i>
I025661 All Wards	Enforcement Policy To approve the Enforcement Policy for Regulatory Services	Executive 6 May 2026	KEY Will have a significant			8) Executive Member for Neighbourhoods <i>Corporate Director of Regeneration and Housing</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
			impact in two or more wards			
<b>Executive Member - Public Health</b>						
1024867 All Wards	Encouraging Healthier Advertising Propose implementation of new advertising policy	Executive 8 Apr 2026	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		9) Executive Member for Public Health <i>Director of Public Health South Tees</i>
1025662	Director of Public Health Annual Report 2026 The purpose of the Director of Public Health Annual Report is to set put how we work together collectively to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities. It highlights the different experiences of health and illness across South Tees and the key challenges we face.	Executive 6 May 2026		Public		9) Executive Member for Public Health <i>Director of Public Health South Tees</i>
1025959 All Wards	Changing Futures Phase 2 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to accept external grant funding that will support the development of a collaborative approach to supporting people	Executive 6 May 2026	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		1) The Mayor <i>Director of Public Health South Tees</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
	experiencing multiple disadvantage.					
1025960 All Wards	Final report of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel: Healthy placemaking with a focus on childhood obesity The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel's 2025 review into Healthy Placemaking with a Focus on Childhood Obesity, undertaken to understand local need, assess current activity and identify opportunities for system wide improvement. The report outlines the evidence gathered across services, summarises the Panel's conclusions, and sets out the recommendations endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 18 March 2026, together with the resulting Action Plan developed by relevant	Executive 10 Jun 2026	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		9) Executive Member for Public Health <i>Director of Public Health South Tees</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
	service areas for Executive approval.					

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**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL****OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD  
15 April 2026****DRAFT FINAL REPORT OF THE OSB SHORT REVIEW  
THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO POVERTY****CONTENTS**

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## **AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION**

1. As part of the Scrutiny Work programme for 2026/2027 the Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed to examine how the Council approached the issue poverty in Middlesbrough. Specifically, it wanted to understand if it was beneficial for the Council to adopt a poverty strategy to support that agenda.

## **COUNCIL PLAN – VISION AND PRIORITIES**

2. The scrutiny of this topic fits within the following vision and priorities of the Council Plan:-
  1. Safe and Resilient Communities – Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

3. The original terms of reference for the short review, as agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Board, were as follows:-
  - To understand the definition of poverty and what this means for Middlesbrough.
  - With a specific focus on demographics, understand the causes and impact of poverty in Middlesbrough.
  - To explore the strategies, plans and policies the Council has in place to address and alleviate poverty in Middlesbrough.
  - To understand what work is being undertaken with external stakeholders to address and alleviate poverty in Middlesbrough.
4. During the evidence gathering process, OSB decided to narrow its focus on Terms of Reference 3, namely, to explore the strategies, plans and policies the Council has in place to address and alleviate poverty in Middlesbrough.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION/SETTING THE SCENE**

### **Poverty Definition**

5. Poverty is a broad and complex subject and can be defined in several ways. It is because it is complex, and somewhat subjective, that the Overview and Scrutiny Board were keen to understand how the Council was seeking to address the issue. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation defines poverty as,

*“When a person’s resources (mainly their material resources) are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs (including social participation).”*

6. While such definitions are helpful in general terms, there still a large degree of subjectivity within them. How does someone define “minimum need”, for example? It is within the context of those inherit complexities the Board reviewed the evidence it received.

## **EVIDENCE**

7. The Board heard that poverty was a longstanding and important issue for the Council as it impacted on every facet of people’s lives. The Board also understood, and appreciated, that several initiatives and programmes were underway to address poverty and to support those experiencing it.
8. The Board were reassured to hear that several award-winning initiatives have been in operation and have been supporting residents experiencing poverty for several years. Such initiatives are exemplified with those within the Welfare Strategy under which 11 themes were being delivered including Discretionary Housing Support, Hardship Support and Food Poverty. Those initiatives had seen quantifiable support which included:
  - An additional 546 recipients of free school meals to those that were entitled to them.
  - 81 referrals to Middlesbrough Environment City equating to £3,000 in energy vouchers.
  - over 8,000 Housing Benefit Claims made with over £42 million having been made available.
9. While the Welfare Strategy is working well and is delivering good results for those in need of financial assistance, the Council wanted to fully understand its own approach to poverty and what poverty meant for the Council. To do this a “Poverty Sprint” was undertaken over a two-week period during which internal and external stakeholders worked together to map the issues surrounding poverty and what support was offered. Those stakeholders included subject specialists including the Council’s Director of Public Health, Public Policy experts from Teesside University and representatives from the Junction Foundation.
10. The Poverty Sprint was based around several themes including financial inclusion, educational and health outcomes and housing provision and aimed to address three general challenges:
  - II. *To understand how we can maximise whole-Council, cross-policy, cross-strategy action to drive real change to poverty in Middlesbrough.*
  - III. *To develop greater clarity of what we can do locally across the Council to achieve greater impact on poverty.*
  - IV. *To devise proposals for how we should develop interconnected strategies to maximise our collective impact on poverty.*

11. The Poverty Sprint demonstrated that poverty did not appear explicitly in many Council strategies and there was a tendency for the Council to develop policies and strategies on this matter in silos. As such, the Poverty Sprint recognised there was a need for a more joined-up strategic approach to poverty.
12. An action plan was created following the Poverty Sprint and good progress has been made against those actions.
13. However, it is sometimes difficult for work to support poverty to become embedded. It was clear that this was not due a lack of will from Council officers or external partners, but that it was sometimes difficult for officers to frame poverty as a singular issue. The Board found the analogy of policy perspectives useful and was advised that several policy perspectives were available and oftentimes applied simultaneously.
14. While an understanding of poverty frequently – and understandably - oftentimes focusses on a person’s financial situation the Board recognises that poverty, while linked to a lack of financial resources, can have broader impacts such as social exclusion.
15. Examples of social exclusion include the loss of a family’s primary income which would lead to that family experiencing increasingly challenging times and a lack of social participation. While this situation may not fit with traditional views of poverty, it is inextricably linked to it, and viewing poverty in this way reveals the Council’s approach to supporting poverty would need to be more expansive.
16. Efforts to synthesise the Council’s approach to poverty are underway. Members were advised that the current Council Plan, introduced in 2023, followed a standard format for such documents. During its creation it was discussed if the Council Plan should adopt a singular thematic approach or a “thematic pillar” approach. The Council Plan ultimately adopted a “Pillar” approach meaning Council business is being delivered according to themed pillars rather than an overarching single, crosscutting theme. While Council business is undertaken in the correct manner, the question of whether the Council should adopt a single, unified poverty strategy has persisted.
17. An example of a “singular approach” to a Council Plan was Leeds Council, which had decided that all Council activity be undertaken with a view of improving the lives of Children and Young People. Adopting this approach gave the Council a single lens to view all its activity. Members considered whether this would be a suitable approach for Middlesbrough Council to take.
18. Members were advised that the Council’s current approach to poverty tries to embed the issue in a business-as-usual approach. To achieve this, the Council’s

performance framework is to be enhanced, with the reintroduction of balanced score cards and regular performance clinics. This would involve individual departments and their contributions to thematic pieces of work, including the poverty agenda.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

19. The Council does not appear to have an agreed, corporate, definition of what poverty means for it. Members appreciate that having a single definition of poverty is not only difficult to achieve, but adopting such a definition may inhibit the Council's ability to offer flexible services.
20. Significant work is being carried out under the Welfare Strategy to support people experiencing financial hardship. This work has delivered quantifiably positive outcomes for residents.
21. There are several policy perspectives that the Council uses to address poverty. It is recognized that these multiple perspectives can lead to a degree of confusion in their approach to supporting the poverty agenda.
22. The Council does not have an overarching poverty strategy. Instead, its approach to poverty is embedded within the thematic pillars of the Council Plan.
23. As part of the Council Plan refresh in 2026, work is being undertaken to enhance the performance regime. It is hoped this will introduce mechanisms to capture work supporting the poverty agenda.
24. How the Council managed the poverty agenda was, to a large extent, a political choice.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

25. Based on the evidence gathered, the Overview and Scrutiny Board submit the following recommendations:

**XXXX**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

1. Overview and Scrutiny Board would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the course of their investigation: -
  - M Adams – Director of Public Health
  - J Savage – Head of Resident and Business Support
  - E Scollay – Chief Executive

## **APPENDICES**

N/A

## **COUNCILLORS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**Overview and Scrutiny Board Membership:** Councillors L Young (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), D Branson, E Clynch, D Coupe J Kabuye, L Lewis, T Mohan, I Morrish, J Platt, M Saunders, Z Uddin, G Wilson J Young.

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DRAFT

**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**

<b>Report of:</b>	Chief Executive, Erik Scollay
<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Mayor, Chris Cooke
<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
<b>Date:</b>	11 March 2026
<b>Title:</b>	Continuous Improvement Plan Progress Report
<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	All
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Why:</b>	Decision does not reach the threshold to be a key decision
<b>Subject to call in?</b>	Yes
<b>Why:</b>	Non-Urgent Report

**Proposed decision(s)**

That Executive:

- **APPROVES** the updated Continuous Improvement Plan
- **NOTES** the progress made in delivering the commitments within the Continuous Improvement Plan.

**Executive summary**

This report provides an overview of delivery against the Council's Continuous Improvement Plan. It captures strategic improvement action being delivered within the organisation to ensure Middlesbrough Council can fully demonstrate its compliance with the principles of the Best Value Duty.

Provision of this report forms part of the assurance framework that has been put in place to demonstrate the Council's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. It will also be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Board.

The report summarises progress made since the Plan was put in place in March 2025.

It focuses on progress made since Executive last considered this Plan in November 2025. The report highlights key achievements, grouping them by Best Value theme and includes a key to indicate the source of recommendations.

**1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out progress in delivering the Continuous Improvement Plan for Executive consideration. The purpose of the Plan is to ensure the Council can articulate its ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and capture activity that has been undertaken to deliver that commitment.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
<b>A successful and ambitious town</b>	The Continuous Improvement Plan contains commitments to work collaboratively with partners, communities and businesses to develop a vision for the Town. Delivery of this will positively impact on the Council's ability to work with partners to deliver all the ambitions within the Council Plan.
<b>A healthy Place</b>	The Continuous Improvement Plan contains a series of actions that will impact positively on the Council's ambitions around Middlesbrough being a healthy place. In particular it includes commitments around poverty reduction ambitions.
<b>Safe and resilient communities</b>	Action is planned within the Continuous Improvement Plan to strengthen the Council's approach to community engagement which will positively impact on this ambition. It sets out progress made to expand community development capacity and develop the proposed Neighbourhoods Strategy with a strong focus on community engagement and co-production of solutions.
<b>Delivering best value</b>	Successful delivery of the Continuous Improvement Plan will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ improve partnership working</li> <li>▪ further enhance financial planning and management</li> <li>▪ reset the Council's approach to transformation</li> <li>▪ strengthen internal audit arrangements</li> <li>▪ enhance scrutiny</li> <li>▪ better support Members.</li> </ul>

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 That the Executive:

- **APPROVES** the updated Continuous Improvement Plan
- **NOTES** the progress made in delivering the commitments within the Continuous Improvement Plan.

### **3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

3.1 Having a Continuous Improvement Plan that captures all strategic continuous improvement activity provides Members and Officers with a comprehensive overview of improvement activity within the organisation as part of a framework of assurance reports. The plan ensures the Council is tracking this type of activity within one document. Successful delivery of continual improvement activity will improve the Council's ability to deliver against its Council Plan ambitions.

### **4. Background and relevant information**

4.1 In March 2025, Full Council considered the final reports of both the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge team and the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board (MIIAB).

4.2 Both of those reports were hugely positive, recognising the improvements the Council had made over the previous two years on its improvement journey. They also contained a series of recommendations, designed to ensure the Council maintained an outcome focussed commitment to the principles of its continuous improvement journey as it transitioned from a period of intervention. In November 2025, the LGA team came back to Middlesbrough and conducted a follow up visit. A copy of their report is attached at Appendix 2. The Continuous Improvement Plan of the Council has been updated to reflect this and their findings.

4.3 The plan also continues to track delivery of actions arising from the External Assurance review undertaken by Grant Thornton as part of the Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) application. It also includes an action arising from the Care Quality Commission inspection of Adult Social Care services.

4.4 Appended to this report, is a copy of the Continuous Improvement Plan and its status as of January 2026. The Plan continues to evolve as actions are delivered and follow up actions are identified where necessary.

4.5 There are currently 49 actions within the plan. In November 2025 it was reported that 22 had been completed. Since that time a further eight have been completed, bringing the total number of completed action to date to 30. Two new actions have been added since the Plan was last reported. The first new action builds on the increased capacity within the neighbourhoods teams and captures plans to bring forward a Community Engagement Strategy in the summer. The second new action captures plans to conduct a further survey with Members and embed regular surveys within the Member Development Strategy.

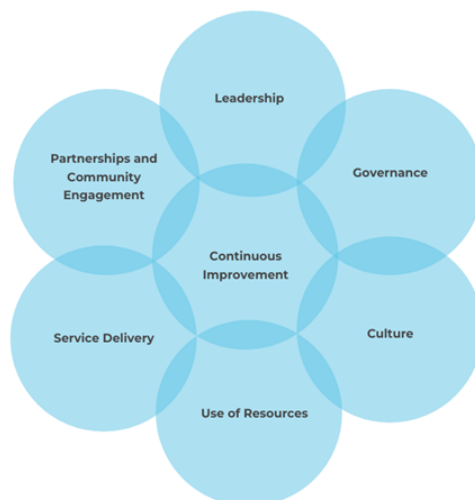
4.6 There are five actions that have been reprofiled:

- Creation of a Partnerships Strategy – reprofiled to allow the Place Leaders Partnership to emerge and develop organically, in order to ensure that all Partners who are involved are assured it is a true partnership approach. As such, while conversations are ongoing to define what partnership working should look like, this action has been reprofiled to enable the proposed document to reflect that emerging thinking

- Creation of a Continuous Improvement Team – this has been reprofiled to allow it to be implemented following agreement of the proposals within the Council Plan report being considered at this executive.
- Executive Member training on finance – the deadline has been reprofiled. Some training has been delivered but Member feedback is awaited on future training needs.
- Development of a communications strategy – this has been reprofiled to ensure there continues to be a focus on communications following the transition from Transformation to Continuous Improvement.
- Implementation of a revised approach to Performance Management – reprofiled slightly, a proposed Performance Management Policy will be brought to Executive for consideration in April 2026.

4.7 A number of actions have been closed to reflect the proposed transition from Transformation to Continuous Improvement.

4.8 Key highlights, filtered by Best Value theme are set out below:



### Partnerships and Community Engagement

4.9 The Council is continuing to improve the way it works with partners with the aim of establishing a consistent, place-based approach, focussed on what Middlesbrough needs, rather than individual organisations. Since progress was last reported to Members:

- The Place Leaders Partnership has identified a company to undertake youth engagement as part of steps to further develop a draft vision
- Continued to work with the Tees Valley Combined Authority. The Local Government Association Peer Challenge follow up report acknowledged the progress that the Council has made to build stronger relationships and praised the action to date.

4.10 The LGA follow up report has commented on the Place Leaders approach, and went on to say that:

‘The emerging vision - centred on young people and extending into early adulthood - signals long-term aspirations for the town and provides a solid foundation for lasting change. This marks a significant shift from a period of internal focus to Middlesbrough taking an active role as the convenor of place.’

### Culture

- 4.11 The latest peer challenge update stated that those the peer team spoke to found the Council to be ‘more stable, confident, and calm, reflecting a wider cultural shift’.
- 4.12 One of the key documents the Council will deliver over the next three years is the People Strategy. The People Strategy sets out the steps the Council will take to ensure its staff have the skills, capabilities, behaviours and values that are needed to deliver improved outcomes for our residents and ultimately deliver the Council Plan ambitions. Since this was last reported, the Council continues to deliver actions within the strategy and regularly report progress and impact. Leadership Management Team considered a progress report in December 2025.
- 4.13 The People Strategy sits alongside the Member Development Strategy, which sets out how the Council will support the training and development needs of councillors. Since last reported, training continues to be delivered for Members. The Continuous Improvement Plan has been amended to include an action to embed a cycle of regular temperature check surveys within the Member Development Strategy as part of steps to increase participation. A variety of methods will be trailed in the next survey to attempt to increase participation. This will be delivered in May 2026.
- 4.14 While the peer team identified many positives, as set out in the Continuous Improvement Plan, it did also agree that while both staff and member perceptions and engagement have improved, there was room to increase the levels of engagement from both groups to ensure their views were being shared and heard. Action to address this is embedded within the ongoing Continuous Improvement Plan.

### Use of Resources

- 4.15 Ensuring resources are used effectively has been, and will continue to be, a key focus of the Council given the financially challenging environment that it continues to operate in. Over the last three months the Council has continued to build on the positive progress it achieved in relation to financial management. The 2026/27 Budget includes provision to increase both reserves and spending on priorities, in a balanced approach that focusses on financial sustainability, following positive local government funding settlement for Middlesbrough.
- 4.16 The Council has now ensured that there is a Pay and Reward specialist in place. The review of Internal Audit arrangements is on track, and the outcome is due to be considered by Audit Committee in April 2026. Since it was last reported, actions in relation to the Treasury Management Strategy have been delivered and in addition, external training on good practice in relation to this field has been commissioned for both Executive and Audit Committee Members. The training was made available to all interested members. Actions in relation to the management of commercial property have now been completed, with new arrangements now live.

## Governance

- 4.17 An action to provide a mid-year Treasury Management Strategy update to Executive in response to an Exceptional Financial Support review recommendation has now been delivered.
- 4.18 Additional capacity is now in place to support the Councillor Gateway system. The Officer started in the post in September 2025. The aim of the post is to improve the user experience Members have with the system. The Council has also reestablished the project group that implemented the system to review whether further improvements can be made. Since this was last reported, a session was held with the most frequent users of the system to deepen understanding of their frustrations and identify opportunities to improve their experiences. This is an area of ongoing focus for the Council in order to ensure that there is a simple, effective system to support Member needs.

### **5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate**

5.1 Not applicable.

### **6. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended**

- 6.1 The Council could choose to maintain multiple documents capturing continuous improvement activity; however, this would be an inefficient approach and would reduce Members' ability to see a comprehensive overview of the Council's ongoing activity in relation to continuous improvement.

### **7. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Responding to the recommendations fully that have been made by both the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge team and Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board (MIIAB) as well as wider strategic continuous improvement activity captured within the Plan will inevitably have financial implications for the Council. Financial implications in relation to individual activities will be set out as necessary and appropriate authority sought to deliver actions.
Legal	While both the LGA peer challenge process and the work of MIIAB are discretionary exercises, the topics covered by both support the Council's compliance with its Best Value Duty. A Continuous Improvement Plan ensures there is a systematic approach to continuous improvement that will provide future assurance to all stakeholders that the Council will respond effectively to any recommendations arising from inspections, reviews and other relevant reports.
Risk	If the Council failed to deliver this Continuous Improvement Plan, this could have a negative impact on potentially all Strategic Risk Register risks. Successful delivery will impact positively on the risk of a failure in corporate governance.

Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	The Continuous Improvement Plan includes actions that will impact positively on this theme, in particular there are planned actions to strengthen the Council's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and community engagement.
Reducing Poverty	While not directly impacting on this theme, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge acknowledged the Council's plans which are already underway to strengthen focus on the existing commitment within the Council Plan that tackling poverty should be at the heart of everything we do.
Climate Change / Environmental	The content of this report is not directly relevant to these areas of impact, however continued implementation of improvement activity will ensure the Council is better able to deliver its Council Plan ambitions and compliance with good governance.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	
Data Protection	

### Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Report progress on delivery of the Continuous Improvement Plan to Overview and Scrutiny Board	Ann-Marie Johnstone, Head of Chief Executive's Department	15 April 2026

### Appendices

1	Continuous Improvement Action Plan - January 2026 update
2	Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

### Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Full Council	Local Government Association Peer Review and Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board reports and planned approach to Continuous Improvement – moving forward	26 March 2025
Executive	Delivery against the Continuous Improvement Plan - Progress update	16 July 2025
Overview and Scrutiny Board	Delivery against the Continuous Improvement Plan - Progress update	30 July 2025

**Contact:** Ann-Marie Johnstone, Head of Chief Executive's Department  
**Email:** ann-marie\_johnstone@middlesbrough.gov.uk

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## Continuous Improvement Plan

Delivery of the Council's Continuous Improvement Plan has a clear relationship with the Best Value Duty. Delivery of actions will ensure it has a robust approach across all the seven themes that comprise the Best Value Duty:



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This will ensure the Council is in a stronger position to deliver the four ambitions it has set out within the 2024 – 2027 Council Plan that Middlesbrough will:

- Be a successful and ambitious town
- Be a healthy place
- Have safe and resilient communities
- Deliver Best Value.

This plan encompasses the following strategic continuous improvement activity:

- The findings of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge team and the progress visit held in November 2025. It now also reflects the content of the follow up visit by some of the team, held in November 2025, where action will not be addressed by the content of this plan, other reports in this meeting or the 2026/7 budget setting process.
- Responses to the last report of the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board (MIIAB)
- recommendations from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)
- An action in response to the Care Quality Commission inspection of Adult Social Care services.

There are currently 49 actions within this plan. Of those 22 are marked as complete, although some still have ongoing commitments and may result in further actions being identified. Since this was last reported, 8 actions have been completed. Two new actions have been added since the Plan was last reported. Of the remaining ongoing actions, 5 that have been reprofiled.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
1	All	Partnerships and Community Engagement	(CPC) Develop in co-production with communities, residents, partners and businesses a long-term vision for the town that is inclusive, practical and deliverable. By looking outwards and harnessing untapped potential to deliver its vision, this will enable everyone to understand and contribute to delivering shared ambitions for the benefit of Middlesbrough and its communities.	The Council is in the process of reestablishing a town wide engagement mechanism for Partners which will be called a Town Board and will replicate the best parts of the defunct Local Strategic Partnership arrangements to ensure there is a regular meeting of key strategic public, private and VCS partners to set the strategic direction for the town and identify and deliver system wide change to improve outcomes for our residents. Once established, the first key task will be to co-produce a vision in a process that engages local communities and residents.	Chief Executive	Board to be established by June 2025 and a co-produced vision will be developed during 2025/26.	<b>Ongoing.</b> Draft Terms of Reference developed, and initial communications will be issued this month with a view to setting up the first meeting in June 2025 to be held in July 2025.	<b>Ongoing.</b> The Board, now known as the Place Leaders Partnership, has now agreed a work programme for its work. The Board has a series of workshop sessions planned between September and December 2025 to focus on the following topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying top priorities for intervention in Middlesbrough's economy</li> <li>2. Evidence base including an updated economic assessment from Locus and strategic approach to communications</li> <li>3. How we can extract the best social value from our collective interventions.</li> </ol>	<b>Ongoing.</b> This emerging Partnership has continued to refine its approach and thinking on this topic. The workshops have been held and continue to be held. <p>A company has been identified to undertake youth engagement as part of steps to further develop a draft plan.</p> <p>The Council Plan report to Executive in March 2026 provides an update on the work of the Partnership and sets out the planned approach to development of the vision. This report, if agreed will give a democratic mandate for the work of the Council in this emerging partnership.</p>

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
								The output of this work will be creation of a Town Plan and a vision for the town.	
2	All	Partnerships and Community Engagement	<p>(CPC) Redefine Middlesbrough's strategic approach to partnership working based on principles of timely and meaningful collaboration, co-design and with common purpose to inspire and build a team beyond the council that are galvanised to deliver for the town.</p> <p>This will strengthen delivery of Middlesbrough's place shaping ambitions, maximise use of collective resources, and help shift the focus from organisational recovery to delivery of improved outcomes for residents.</p>	The Council is committed to working with partners more effectively to co-produce a vision for the town, alongside a strategy, underpinned by agreed principles which will govern how we will work together to deliver improved outcomes for our residents. It is planned to use the reestablished Towns Board to co-produce an agreed strategic approach to partnership working.	Chief Executive	March 2026 – reprofiled to August 2026	See above.	<b>Ongoing.</b> The outcome of the workshops set out above will be used to then develop a collective, long-term vision for the town and a coproduced partnership vision and plan for the town.	<b>Ongoing and reprofiled.</b> It has been important to allow the Partnership to emerge and develop organically, in order to ensure that all Partners who are involved are assured it is a true partnership approach. As such, while conversations are ongoing to define what partnership working should look like, this action has been reprofiled to enable the proposed document to reflect that emerging thinking.
3	All	Partnerships and Community Engagement	(CPC) Develop and seek to strengthen relationships with the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and Tees Valley councils. This will maximise the potential for Middlesbrough and the wider Tees	Officers are continuing to engage with the TVCA officers to work positively with them and there are a range of officer working groups that are well established across the Tees Valley.	Mayor and Chief Executive	May 2025	<b>Complete.</b> Following publication of the LGA corporate peer challenge team report, the Chief Executive wrote to the Interim Chief Executive of TVCA to seek	Tees Valley Chief Executives continue to meet weekly with the TVCA and supporting statutory officers are also regularly meeting with their respective partners.	In November 2025, the Council had a Corporate Peer Challenge follow up visit by the Local Government Association. That report acknowledged the progress the Council has made to build stronger

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
			Valley to realise the benefits from being at the forefront of devolution and drive economic development and growth which will be critical to all the council's ambitions.	The Council will seek formal engagement with the TVCA other Local Government members of the Combined Authority to outline a proposed revised engagement approach across matters of mutual interests to enable improved outcomes for residents and businesses in the Tees Valley			discussions. First sessions were held in May. The Council has also engaged with TVCA staff to provide support in response to the recent Best Value Inspection Notice and Section 24 statutory recommendations that have been issued to TVCA.  This is just the start of work and while this specific action is complete, further actions will be generated in due course to build on this.  Chief Executives have agreed their participation in recruitment of the development corporation chairs for other areas as part of steps to continue positive relationships.	TVCA is on an improvement journey which the Council is actively supporting it on.  There have been some key initial improvements. We will continue to work proactively with TVCA to build on this.	relationships with TVCA. The report praised the action to date.
4	All	Partnerships and Community Engagement	(CPC) Seek to resolve the hiatus with the Middlesbrough Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC)	The Council will seek formal discussions with TVCA and government on options to address the hiatus in the best interests of	Chief Executive	May 2025	<b>Complete</b> and ongoing.  TVCA have agreed to develop a document which will articulate	The TVCA Mayor has now appointed a Chief Operating Officer for the MDC. There is now a plan in place to manage the transfer of assets	Work on this is ongoing on this. The TVCA budget setting report for 2026/27 considered by Cabinet on 30 January 2026 has identified risks in relation future funding

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
			<p>to achieve a shared plan for the town.</p> <p>This will unlock its potential as a powerful mechanism for effectively delivering economic development and growth and integrating the resources and assets of the council and TVCA.</p>	the residents of Middlesbrough.			<p>planned outcomes form the MDC and the timing of the Council and TVCA's contributions toward it.</p>	<p>into MDC which has resolved the hiatus.</p> <p>As part of the TVCA Best Value Notice governance review, the TVCA Mayor has now appointed an independent chairperson of the MDC, former Middlesbrough Council Chief Executive, Tony Parkinson.</p> <p>MDC is now a partner on the Place Leadership Partnership. Work is underway between the Council and the MDC to reassess existing development and delivery plans collaboratively.</p>	to cover the core costs of the MDC between 2026-28.
5	All	Culture	<p>(CPC) Develop and embed a comprehensive approach to strengthening equality, diversity, and inclusion, including:</p> <p>a. In organisational development, the workforce and democratic representation;</p> <p>b. Within strategy, policy, and service delivery; and</p>	We will raise the ambitions within the People Strategy and Member Development Strategy (expanding to include promotion of councillor roles to potential future councillors) to seize the opportunities that an improved approach to community engagement will	Head of HR and Head of Legal (People)	<p>People Strategy annual review (April 2025)</p> <p>Member Development Strategy annual review (To note, the last review determined that it should be moved from February 2026 to June 2026 to follow</p>	<p><b>Complete</b> and ongoing.</p> <p>Revised People Strategy considered and adopted by LMT in May. There is a detailed workplan in place which contains greater ambition and activity in relation to community engagement.</p>	<p>The Leadership team continue to receive regular reports setting out progress in delivery of the People Strategy and its impact on the workforce and the commitment to improve the way it reflects our local population. The Council is continuing to develop its organisational development offer which is now live and</p>	<p>A further update on the People Strategy was provided to LMT in December 2025, and the strategy will be reviewed in April 2026.</p> <p>The HR EDI Lead provided an update of activity to LMT in October 2025 including the expansion of staff networks to include a Neurodivergent Group and a Parent and Family Group.</p>

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
			<p>c. Community engagement, ensuring it looks at this agenda strategically for Middlesborough as a whole, not only for the organisation and those elected or employed.</p> <p>This will ensure EDI is at the heart of everything it does, that the council is representative of the communities it serves and delivers better decision-making by harnessing different perspectives</p>	bring as our residents increase their trust in the Council.		the municipal year.)	<p>The Council now offers briefings to those who are considering standing for local election. This needs to be codified within the next review of the Member Development Strategy.</p>	<p>will be further developed. We have invested in the capacity of our HR and OD functions in order to ensure we can deliver our ambitions.</p> <p>As part of delivery of the Member Development Strategy, there is ongoing engagement, delivered through the Members Communications working group.</p> <p>Following a meeting of the Members and Officers Communication Working group in September, the Council will be establishing regular quarterly training sessions to drive a regular cycle of training opportunities as part of the suite of actions being delivered by the Member Development Strategy.</p>	<p>Ongoing delivery of the Management Development Programme focussed on the three C's - Collaboration, Communication and Change continues to build on improving workforce culture.</p> <p>On the Member Engagement Strategy, the Council acknowledges the ongoing challenges referenced in the latest peer team report, that highlight ongoing mixed levels of attendance at development events. It will continue to deploy a variety of engagement methods and considered this issue within the annual review of the Member Development Strategy.</p>
				We will review the Council's report formats, policy and strategy templates to strengthen the way the Council	Head of Governance, Policy and Information	May 2025	<b>Complete.</b> Report formats were revised in April. Communications		

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
				assesses the impact of its activities on equality, diversity and inclusion.			<p>issued to report authors and all staff involved in the report development process. An Engagement session was held with Wider Leadership Management Team to outline the rationale for changes including improved consideration of impacts on EDI as well as improving the way reports demonstrate their impact on the four Council Plan ambitions.</p> <p>The Council has also reviewed its Impact Assessment Policy to capture impacts on poverty.</p>		
				Over the next 12 months the Council plans to increase community development capacity as part of the emerging Neighbourhoods Strategy which will include actions to also reset its	Director of Environment and Community Services	March 2026	Ongoing.	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> The Council has now put in place additional Community Engagement Staff to increase its capacity around this as well as employment of additional capacity to undertake public engagement in key</p>	<p><b>Complete.</b> Neighbourhoods model, agreed by Executive in April 2025, is now in delivery.</p> <p>A new follow up action has been added in January 2026 to capture the next steps</p>

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				<p>approach to community engagement to ensure it better understands and responds to the needs of its communities as well as reestablishing a proactive approach to decision making that focusses on coproduction where possible.</p>				<p>areas. In the first instance this has focussed on education around waste and recycling.</p> <p>We have commenced a programme of community conversations.</p> <p>The Council is also engaging with a national leader in community engagement to review its strategic, long-term approach, reviewing the current approach and making recommendations to further strengthen community engagement and cohesion work.</p> <p>Recent confirmation for two Middlesbrough Wards to be included in Pride in Place programme Phase 2 (formerly Neighbourhood Trailblazers will give an opportunity to put the new principles into practice during 2026 and into the following 10-year delivery phase.</p>	<p>which are to set out a Community Engagement Strategy.</p>

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
				NEW** Bring forward a Community Engagement Strategy that will set out how the Council uses this increased capacity to systematically engage with its residents.		August 2026			<b>New action</b> identified in January 2026 following completion of the above.
6	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(CPC) Bring further rigour to financial planning and management to support savings delivery and financial resilience by:  a. Reviewing the MTFP assumptions and updating them on a quarterly basis, with clear plans for managing demand and delivering savings reported in monthly budget reports.  b. Supporting Executive Members to own and shape the financial position, within their portfolio areas and collectively, working with senior officers to challenge,	Effects on the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) are going to be included within future quarterly budget outturn reports.  The Council already has a cycle of monthly budget reporting and agreement of actions in response to issues raised by this process. These are then formally reported to Members/ appropriate member decision making and engagement is undertaken. This is included within the quarterly outturn reports.	Section 151 Officer	To commence within the year-end report for 2024/25 (June 2025)	<b>Complete</b> and ongoing. Impacts on the MTFP are reflected within the year-end report being considered by Executive in June 2025. Going forward this will be expanded on in future reports.	Financial pressures have been a significant issue in 2025/26 to date and were reported in full in the Quarter One Budget outturn report and also in the September MTFP update to Executive.  As a result of this predicted overspend, all services with an overspend were required to develop financial recovery plans with a view to achieving a balanced budget overall in 2025/26. The output of this work will be reflected within the Quarter Two Budget Outturn report and will feed the update of the MTFP due in December.  The Section 151 Officer is considering all measures that could be taken	

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			<p>monitor and hold each other to account.</p> <p>c. Embed understanding and ownership of the financial position with budget holders to ensure the on-going delivery of transformation, savings and efficiencies.</p> <p>d. Ensuring that scrutiny and audit oversight is effective, transparent and supports understanding - beyond the council - with key partners and the public.</p> <p>e. Reviewing pay scales to support recruitment and retention of key staff, linked to workforce and succession planning, with a focus on both bringing in external, as well as nurturing internal, talent.</p>	<p>Executive role - Further training will be provided to Executive Members on financial management disciplines. The Council already has in place Executive involvement in the budget clinic cycle, attending on a quarterly basis for all areas except Children's Services where they attend monthly.</p>	Section 151 Officer	March 2026	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> Following identification of the Executive Members, a training programme is being developed in consultation with the lead member for finance with a draft training programme to be in place by July for delivery from September onwards.</p>	<p>should the above action not result in an improved budget position.</p> <p><b>In delivery.</b> The first training session was held in September to provide an overview of the Financial position of the Council for all members and training sessions have been held targeted at Executive Members on wider governance issues and communications good practice. The next phase needs to cover financial management good practice and disciplines to commence in late October. While this is still being scoped, the first training session has been set to be jointly delivered from a Member and Officer perspective and will cover the role of an Executive Member in the budget setting process.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p><b>Ongoing.</b> Treasury Management training being delivered in February. Action refiled to March 2026. Member feedback on further</p>
				Commence delivery of the Executive Member training programme in relation to finance.	Section 151 Officer	<p>July 2025</p> <p>Refiled to March 2026</p>	In development.	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> Executive Members will be asked to shape their training ask as part of their training session in late October.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> Treasury Management training being delivered in February. Action refiled to March 2026. Member feedback on further</p>

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									training needs is required to shape the content of a wider training programme.
				Regular monthly reports continue to be submitted to Leadership Team and Wider Leadership Management Team on the budget position. We have an ongoing training programme that we are committed to delivering to ensure we raise and maintain the financial skill sets of our budget holders. Additional support is targeted at new budget holders, on a risk-based approach, with the highest levels of support targeted at those managing the most volatile budgets.	Section 151 Officer	Monthly	<b>Ongoing.</b>	<b>Ongoing.</b> The Council's budget continues to be monitored on a monthly basis.	<b>Ongoing.</b> As the Council transitions into business-as-usual continuous improvement, this process will be refined in 2026/27.
				A proposal will be submitted to Audit Committee to recommend it completes a self-assessment against CIPFA Good Governance guidance in March. If agreed, it will be delivered during 2025/26.	Section 151 Officer	March 2025, with the review to be completed during 2025/26	<b>Complete</b> and ongoing. The review is underway and is being facilitated by an LGA regional advisory who is a former Section 151 Officer.	<b>Complete.</b> The outcome of this was agreed by Committee and reported to Full Council in October within the first Annual Report of the Committee.	<b>Complete.</b> Work is ongoing to implement an agreed development plan.

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							The outcome of that review will be agreed by committee and then reported within the first annual report from the Committee to full Council, anticipated to be delivered by September 2025.		
				Scrutiny - the Monitoring officer and S151 officer are working towards development of an integrated approach to reporting the quarterly outturn position to improve members understanding of the overall position of the Council financially and their understanding of the impact on delivery of Council plan priorities.	Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer  Reallocated to the Chief Executive from the Monitoring Officer following the Senior Management review	June 2025 onwards  Revised target April 2026	Discussions on how to ensure that integrated performance and finance reporting works effectively to demonstrate a narrative across the two disciplines and informs Council decision making is ongoing.  It is proposed that this initial target is reset to allow the Council time to reset its wider approach to Performance management, with a view to implementing a new approach from 2026/27.	<b>Ongoing.</b> The Council is in the process of completing recruitment to additional financial and performance posts that will support this outcome.	<b>Ongoing.</b> Since last reported, the Council has identified staff to enter key roles and is in the process of onboarding these staff.  There will be an integrated Performance and Budget Management Policy brought forward to Executive in April 2026 for agreement following collaborative working with finance and performance staff. The new cycle will be implemented to align with the refreshed Council Plan.
				The Town Board, once reestablished, will become the vehicle through	Chief Executive	June 2025	See previous.	<b>Complete.</b> The Town Board, now known as the Place Leaders Partnership, has now been	

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				which strategic discussions with our partners are held this will include sharing information about our spending power and priorities. The Board will be established during 2025.				established, it has agreed a work programme that is designed to enable it to create a shared vision for the town.	
				We are securing additional capacity within the HR team to be able to look at options around the Council's recruitment and retention of key staff as well as ongoing delivery of the People Strategy to ensure our staff have the skills and capabilities to be able to meet the needs of succession planning.	Head of HR	May 2025	<b>Complete.</b> Growth bid has been approved to provide this additional capacity. Additional action captured to track recruitment to the post.		
				Complete recruitment of the Pay and Reward Specialist to provide additional capacity to review the Council's approach on this matter.	Head of HR	September 2025		<b>Overdue.</b> Following failure to attract candidates, the post was reviewed and is currently being recruited to again. Should this also be unsuccessful, the organisation will be looking at all options to ensure it has capacity in this key area.	<b>Complete.</b> Post now in place.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
7	All	Use of Resources	<p>(CPC) Reframe Middlesbrough's approach to transformation, shifting from tactical savings during a crisis, to long term financial sustainability and continuous improvement to deliver better outcomes, by:</p> <p>a. Undertaking a cross-council reset and relaunch of its transformation priorities, alongside the council plan and council values, underpinned by strong leadership, a robust communications and engagement plan, and organisational development strategy.</p> <p>b. Creating a senior transformation officer role to lead, consolidate and prioritise the current programme, identify new</p>	<p>Following successful delivery of a programme of projects which have been primarily focussed on putting the council on a sound financial footing.</p> <p>The Council is currently pausing slightly to ensure the next phase of its approach to transformation of services, using a refined set of projects and programmes that has an increased focus on delivery of improved outcomes for our residents to support delivery of the council plan vision and underpinning ambitions, within a sustainable cost envelope.</p> <p>A report on the revised approach and the plans to put in place the capacity to deliver it successfully will be presented to Executive shortly.</p>	Chief Executive and Section 151 officer	April 2025	<p><b>Complete.</b> The Council has taken a reset report to Executive in April which has set out how it will amend delivery of the Council's approach to transformation. This includes plans to recruit a senior transformation officer.</p>		<p><b>Complete.</b> Following the refresh of the Council Plan and the transition to continuous improvement, the Council has transitioned away from the original transformation programme to an embedded approach to continuous improvement that will focus on identification and delivery of business change, where needed to improve outcomes for residents and businesses.</p>

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
			<p>areas for transformation, track progress and delivery of desired outcomes, and drive the organisational change and buy-in required to deliver successful transformation.</p> <p>c. Reviewing capacity to deliver Middlesbrough's transformation ambitions, including within corporate services and supporting data and analysis and performance management, to ensure that all relevant services are adequately resourced to support transformation outcomes.</p>	<p>Complete recruitment of a Strategic Lead for Transformation.</p>	Chief Executive	<p>September 2025</p> <p>To be reprofiled.</p>	<p>New action added following completion of the initial commitment to reset the Council's approach to transformation</p>	<p><b>Overdue.</b> The Council had appointed a strategic lead who was due to commence working with the Council in October 2025. This person has unfortunately withdrawn from this process. Over the next quarter action will be taken to seek other candidates.</p>	<p><b>Action cancelled</b> and replaced with the Council's continuous improvement approach, embedded within the Council's revised approach to performance management.</p>
				<p>complete recruitment of a Continuous Improvement Team.</p>	Strategic Lead for Transformation	<p>October 2025</p> <p>To be reprofiled.</p> <p>Reprofiled to May 2026</p>	<p>New action added following completion of the initial commitment to reset the Council's approach to transformation</p>	<p><b>Overdue.</b> This action was delayed as a result of delays to the appointment of the Strategic Lead for Transformation. This is being reprofiled to be delivered by March 2026.</p> <p>The Council has created additional capacity within its senior leadership around the transformation themes of digital and housing, with two new Head of Service posts created and appointed to over the summer who are providing additional leadership capacity in those areas.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing.</b></p>
8	Delivering Best Value	Continuous Improvement	(CPC) Establish a locally owned assurance and improvement	This Continuous Improvement Plan and the regular reporting of it to	Chief Executive	July 2025 onwards	<b>Ongoing.</b> This document forms part of the first	<b>Ongoing.</b> This is the second report that has been produced	<b>Ongoing.</b> This is the third report that has been produced.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
			<p>approach for Middlesbrough once the voluntary improvement Board steps down.</p> <p>This will help embed and sustain continuous improvement and support, providing oversight of the golden thread between the council's vision, corporate plan, performance and delivery of outcomes. By doing so, it will provide the council, its partners, and residents with assurance that the improvement journey is continuing at pace.</p>	<p>Executive and Scrutiny will ensure there is a locally owned assurance and improvement plan in place.</p>			<p>reports that will be submitted.</p>	<p>as part of this framework.</p>	
9	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	<p>(CPC) Review and strengthen Middlesbrough's internal audit arrangements and provision. This will ensure they are fit for purpose and adequately support its continuous improvement and assurance journey, with internal audit a key tool when deployed strategically in the delivery of high-</p>	<p>Commission an external review of the current arrangements for internal audit to provide assurance to the Council as to whether they remain fit for purpose or require adjustment to better support the Council's continuous improvement and assurance journey.</p>	Section 151 Officer	<p>Review to be commissioned by September 2025 for deliver in 2025/26.</p>	<p>An initial meeting has been held with Veritau to discuss the scope of this review and timescales.</p> <p>It is anticipated that a draft scope setting out required outcomes from an Internal Audit Service will be developed in consultation with Leadership Management</p>	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> There are ongoing discussions with the Council's provider to review the approach and the outcome of this will be reported to Audit Committee in April 2026.</p> <p>In line with good practice, some initial changes have already been agreed. For example, it is good practice to change the lead auditor</p>	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> On track to be considered by Audit Committee in April 2026 as per that committee's work programme.</p>

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			quality services, transformation and financial outcomes				Team by August 2025.	periodically. This will be implemented in 2025/26 by the provider.	
10	All	Governance	<p>(CPC) Review and strengthen Middlesbrough's overview &amp; scrutiny arrangements.</p> <p>This will ensure arrangements support robust and impactful scrutiny for the future, aligned with best practice.</p>	<p>A planned review is already underway to assess the impact and effectiveness of the current arrangements following 12 months of their implementation with a view to changing if needed. Guidance from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny will be used and members will be fully engaged in the review.</p> <p>In addition, a pre-scrutiny protocol will be developed to establish a collaborative working relationship between Executive and Scrutiny Councillors to enhance decision-making in the organisation.</p>	Monitoring Officer	May 2025	<p><b>Complete.</b> Review of scrutiny arrangements completed in December and the final report went to Overview and Scrutiny Board in April 2025. As a result of the review, scrutiny panels have been amended to increase panel capacity from 3 to 4 (including OSB).</p> <p>Pre-scrutiny protocol submitted to LMT in May 2025 prior to submission to OSB in July.</p>		
				NEW** Conduct a survey of scrutiny members to seek their views on the current approach to scrutiny to	Monitoring Officer	May 2026			Action put in place to assess the extent that the new arrangements are embedded and identify opportunities

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
				assess the impact of the revised model.					for further improvement.
11	All	Governance	(CPC) Support councillors further in their roles through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Providing the Executive with administrative support and training for their roles;</li> <li>b. Addressing issues with Councillor Gateway system;</li> <li>c. Providing sufficient advanced notice for meetings, and at times that meet councillors' needs; and</li> <li>d. Promote and encourage good councillor conduct, including on digital platforms.</li> </ul>	We are securing additional democratic support capacity to support the Executive team administration their roles.	Monitoring Officer	September 2025	<b>Completed.</b> Agreed growth bid in place.		
				Complete recruitment to an additional Business Support Officer post to support the work of the Executive	Monitoring Officer	September 2025	<b>Completed in</b> June 2025.	<b>Completed.</b> The occupant is now in place for the new post.	
				The Council has reinstated the Gateway Project Board that oversaw development of the gateway. Deliver the Improvement action plan that has been developed by that Board. The Board includes Member representatives.	Monitoring Officer	Ongoing	n/a	<b>Ongoing.</b> New action focussed on ensuring there is a mechanism to improve the user experience.	<b>Ongoing.</b> There is a group that is meeting regularly to understand this. Officers have recently met with the most frequent users of the system to improve their experience. At the same time there is focussed work ongoing to improve processes.
				Training for Executive Members to be developed	Monitoring Officer	Ongoing	<b>Complete and ongoing.</b> The incoming Executive have been offered access to the LGA Executive member leadership training course as well as provision of an ongoing		

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							<p>training and development offer covering governance, communications, finance and</p> <p>This will continue to be tracked to ensure a good take up. It aligns with the governance and finance training also in delivery.</p>		
				We are securing additional capacity to support the quality of responses to Members and to manage feedback from Members to establish a continuous improvement approach to both the system and the outcomes members are seeking.	Monitoring Officer	September 2025	<b>Completed.</b> Agreed growth bid in place.		
				Complete recruitment to the additional support to support an improved Member Enquiries experience for Councillors	Monitoring Officer	September 2025	Ongoing.	<b>Complete.</b> The occupant is now in post.	
				Ongoing discussions will continue to be held with Members to	Monitoring Officer	May 2025 committee diary setting	<b>Complete.</b> In order to ensure this is member led, it has been		

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				<p>identify the issues with timings and options the Council could put in place to manage timings and support Members to attend.</p>		<p>by Council and ongoing</p>	<p>decided to book provisional dates for meetings of committees and then facilitate a committee-by-committee discussion on timing and frequency of meetings to meet Member needs. The Council will continue to seek feedback on this and refine the approach as necessary.</p>		
				<p>We have recently delivered further training to all Members on good conduct on social media and will regularly push out reminders on good practice on social media usage.</p>	<p>Monitoring Officer</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> social media posts continue to be a source of standards complaints.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> Standards training delivered in September for Councillors and Parish Councillors covered this as a topic. Unfortunately, there was a very low turnout for that training. Members are being urged to engage in the training that is being offered. Officers continue to look at the way training is delivered and timings to ensure they consider all options to improve Member engagement. Member feedback will be sought on an ongoing basis to</p>	<p><b>Complete and embedded.</b> The Council will maintain a regular cycle of analysing root causes of Member conduct and delivering preventative training. This is embedded within the work programme of the Council's Standards Committee.</p>

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								adjust the approach as necessary.	
12	All	Governance	<p>(CPC) Continue to improve member and officer relationships with clear understanding of the respective roles, responsibilities and promoting good behaviours.</p> <p>This will continue to strengthen Middlesbrough's governance guardrails, promote conduct in line with the Nolan Principles, and avoid the risks which in the past have arisen from Middlesbrough's Mayoral model.</p>	We are committed to an ongoing cycle of training and development of both officers and Members and will regularly take the temperature of the organisation through engagement and surveys to identify where more needs to be done.	Monitoring Officer	Ongoing regular surveys throughout the year	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> Staff temperature check survey went live in June 2025.</p> <p>Members were surveyed as part of the review of the Member Development Survey in February 2025. The next planned survey will be undertaken in September 2025 and will focus on Member and Officer relationships.</p> <p>The Statutory Officers meet with group leaders on a monthly basis.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> Since last reported, the Council has completed a further survey of its staff. This year's survey had a significant increase in respondents with 16% more of the workforce responding to the survey. As well as increased engagement, there was an increase in the positivity staff feel about working for the Council. Staff also felt more comfortable in expressing their opinions honestly. Most staff were also very clear how their work linked to the ambitions in the Council Plan.</p> <p>A temperature check survey of Members was launched in October and the outcome will be reported in the next update.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing.</b> The Council will maintain a regular cycle of analysing root causes of Member conduct complaints and delivering preventative training. This is embedded within the work programme of the Council's Standards Committee.</p> <p>A further survey will be completed in May 2026 of members – regular contact with surveys with Members will be embedded within the Member Development Strategy. The methodology of engagement will be varied to attempt to increase participation.</p>
13	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources, Service delivery and Continuous Improvement	(MIIAB) Develop a medium-term plan, as organisational capacity improves, to integrate finance and performance reporting within the	Following successful growth bids to put in place the capacity within Finance, action is being taken to secure additional	Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer	Staff will be recruited into post by September 2025.	<b>Ongoing.</b> Additional posts have now been job evaluated for the performance team and are	<b>Overdue.</b> Further recruitment underway within finance and performance to facilitate this. There have been some	<b>Complete.</b> Additional capacity is now secured; the Corporate Performance Manager will commence work during April 2026.

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			corporate governance framework.	capacity to reestablish a more embedded performance management process as well. Action will initially be taken to recruit additional capacity, with a view to first working together to strengthen performance management and reporting and then jointly developing an integrated approach to reporting to improve the Council's ability to demonstrate alignment of its resources with Council priorities and the relationship between resourcing and performance across its priority areas.			going through the VCF process.  Recruitment to the Deputy 151 officer post has been completed. This post will be necessary to shape the nature of the additional capacity within finance and complete recruitment. They will commence in post in late July 2025.	delays following two unsuccessful attempts to recruit to a Corporate Performance Manager post. The Council is exploring all options to address this.	Some further capacity planned to be recruited to during 2026/27 to support the Corporate Performance Manager.  Initial population of the finance structure is in place but will be subject to further development in 2026/27 as part of actions to move the Council toward achievement an improved star rating against the CIPFA financial good practice model.
14	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(MIAAB) Focus on long term financial resilience and:  a. tight control on 2025/26, b. develop a balanced position for the medium term, c. have a planned approach to	The Council has a robust budget management approach in place which it intends to maintain in 2025/26, including ongoing budget clinics, with Member involvement within them, as well as	Section 151 Officer	Quarterly throughout 2025/26  Proposed revised target of April 2026 onwards	Discussions on how to ensure that integrated performance and finance reporting works effectively to demonstrate a narrative across the two disciplines and informs Council	<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>Ongoing.</b> Work is ongoing to develop this model with an ambition to start its implementation, subject to member approval, from the end of Quarter One 2026/27.

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			<p>growth,</p> <p>d. do not fund ongoing expenditure from one off funding pots,</p> <p>e. focus on transformational opportunities.</p>	<p>monthly budget reporting to inform these processes.</p> <p>Regular liaison with Executive will be undertaken as part of the quarterly review of the effects of decisions and expenditure on the MTFP. This will include medium term planning for growth.</p> <p>Not funding ongoing expenditure from one off pots of funding is a principle that is already robustly applied to Council budget setting processes. For example the proposed governance of the Middlesbrough Priorities fund includes such a principle.</p>			<p>decision making is ongoing.</p> <p>It is proposed that this initial target is reset to allow the Council time to reset its wider approach to Performance management, with a view to implementing a new approach from 2026/27.</p>		
15	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(MIIAB) Be prudent with extra money: top up reserves (to a level higher than currently suggesting), invest in contingency.	This is another principle within the Council's budget setting process and there are a number of contingencies built into the budget	Section 151 Officer	n/a - Ongoing over the life of the Medium Term Financial Plan	<b>Ongoing.</b> The Year end outturn report on 11 June 2025, shows a positive direction of travel on reserves over the life of the MTFP.	<b>Ongoing.</b>	<b>Ongoing.</b> The 2026/27 proposed budget includes a substantial increase in reserves, with further increases planned over the medium term. Further detail on this is

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				<p>including a risk fund to manage risks around non-delivery of savings.</p> <p>The Medium-Term Financial Plan includes plans to grow the reserves prudently while balancing against the level of demand arising from being a local authority in one of the country's most deprived areas.</p>			<p>On 31 March 2025, reserves were at £21.654m, compared to a target that was set during the section 24 action plan delivery of £18.1m by 31 March 2025.</p>		<p>set out in the Reserves Policy 26/27.</p>
16	All	All	(MIIAB) Build organisational capacity to strengthen resilience in finance, HR, OD and transformation to support delivery of your corporate plan priorities.	<p>The Council has already taken action to identify funding for growth in these areas and it will consider whether there are any further growth needs within its reset approach to transformation which will be considered by Executive in April 2025.</p>	Chief Executive	May 2025	<p><b>Complete and ongoing.</b> Finance growth bid is now secured and a service review will be undertaken to ensure it is utilised effectively once the new Deputy 151 Officer is in post from late July 2025. The review is expected to commence by November 2025.</p> <p>The Council has reset its approach to transformation and set aside significant capital receipts that can be drawn down as needed to</p>	<p>Review of Finance capacity is ongoing with additional capacity built into the structure which are currently out for recruitment. The Council is carefully building up its capacity in this area to ensure that it has a planned approach to onboarding this additional capacity to ensure it is able to make the maximum positive impact.</p>	

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
							<p>fund support services as the Strategic Lead of Transformation drives the Council's approach to transformation and develops, in detail, the activities that will need to be taken. In April 2025, Executive agreed flexible use of Capital receipts to fund a strategic lead for Transformation and additional support capacity in the form of a continuous improvement team.</p> <p>Recruitment to these posts is expected to commence in July 2025.</p>		
17	All	Leadership	(MIIAB) Continue to focus on organisational development as an important part of your continuous improvement journey, with a particular focus on team development and embedding stable, permanent leadership	Executive and Leadership team development programme has been put in place and is resuming at pace, with external support and expertise. In addition, the Council is refreshing support for its wider	Monitoring Officer	Ongoing	The Council's Organisational Development (OD) Team has developed a leadership and management training programme that spans from aspiring manager level through to Chief Executive.	<b>Ongoing.</b> The post has now been recruited to and a start date agreed for November 2025. Once this person is in post, the organisation will be moving at pace to launch its revised management support offer.	<b>Ongoing.</b> New Senior OD Business Partner appointed in November 2025, enabling to us to develop OD Projects in - Workforce Planning, Coaching & mentoring, Work Experience and Apprenticeships. All to be rolled out from

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
			arrangements.	Managers, reestablishing a management training gateway, along with a wide range of programmes to develop skills and capacity. This is being overseen within the delivery of the People Strategy.			<p>The programme focusses on a core set of skills and behaviours to ensure they are embedded across the organisation.</p> <p>The Council is working to increase the capacity of its OD team and aims to complete recruitment to a vacant post within the team by September 2025.</p>	<p>A series of sessions are already in delivery with Leadership Management Team and Executive over the autumn.</p>	<p>February 2026 onwards.</p> <p>New Customer Excellence training programme to mobilise the new Customer Strategy and Charter is also in development and will be rolled out from March 2026 to the full workforce.</p> <p>We have also developed and introduced a new Staff and Management Development Programme to further develop knowledge and skills in Communication, Collaboration and Change. Successful pilot programme ran October – December 2025, delivery schedule agreed to offer this to the full workforce until March 2027.</p> <p>In addition, the OD Manager continues to work with LMT and Executive to build relationships and develop collective leadership behaviours and approaches, sessions ran in October and</p>

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
									November 2025 will be continued this year.
18	All	All	(MIIAB) Complete and implement your communications strategy and use it as an effective tool to bring the council vision to life and to ensure that both the internal and external environment understands the outcomes the council is trying to achieve.	Once the Council has reset its approach to transformation, a draft Communications Strategy will be developed to ensure that there is a plan in place, owned by senior leaders, that ensures the Council is clearly communicating its vision, priorities and actions to ensure Members, Staff, the public and partners understand and engage with the outcomes the council is trying to achieve.	Chief Executive	Draft Strategy June 2025, to be reviewed on a quarterly basis by Leadership team.  Reprofiled to September 2025.  This will be reprofiled to June 2026.	In progress. The Communications team continues to prioritise topics that are linked to the Council Plan. The changes to the approach to transformation are still emerging. One key update is the briefings for staff held by the Chief Executive on the Council Plan, the organisation's values and transformation	<b>Ongoing.</b> This will be revisited as part of the refreshed approach to Transformation that will be led by the incoming Strategic Lead for Transformation. Once they have taken an initial view, this target date will be reprofiled to align with their work priorities.  The Council is continuing to review the effectiveness of its internal communications within business-as-usual processes.	<b>Ongoing.</b> As the original transformation programme evolves into one of continuous improvement, a communications plan will be developed to keep staff, partners and residents updated.
19	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(EFS) The council are mitigating this risk for 2024/25 through contingencies and EFS. There are also reserves though these are at a critically low level. From 2025/26 onwards, the council aims to deliver transformational savings but we consider there to be significant risk in this	The Council has put in place a savings delivery risk budget and has also increased the levels of reserves to manage this risk and is in the process of also resetting its approach to transformation. Regular monitoring of savings delivery will continue to	Section 151 Officer	September 2025	<b>Ongoing.</b> The Section 151 Officer has in place a regular monitoring and reporting cycle on delivery of savings and sets out this performance within the Quarterly budget outturn reports to Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Board.	<b>Ongoing.</b> This is being considered within the Financial Recovery Plans during Quarter Two.	<b>Complete.</b> The Council has delivered substantial savings during its transformation programme and is now in a position to be able to move into a Continuous Improvement cycle. It will continue to maintain a grip on savings identified, using that new cycle,

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
			plan. We raise Recommendation 15 for the council to develop comprehensive mitigation plans for savings that have been designated as 'Amber' and 'Red' within the Transformation Programme, focusing on identifying barriers and implementing solutions to reduce risks. Ensuring these plans are regularly updated and integrated into the projects.	take place with mitigation being developed as appropriate.  <b>SMART action</b> – Any savings that are deemed to be undeliverable must be replaced with mitigation. Financial Regulations will be amended to set out clear expectations around this.			As of June 2025, no savings for 2025/26 have been identified as undeliverable. Performance by quarter will be reported in the Quarter One outturn report, due to be submitted to Executive in September 2025. Further actions as required will be developed following that.		
20	Delivering Best Value	Governance	(EFS) We raise Recommendation 3 encouraging the council to: a) consider the merits of appointing at least one independently, ideally two, co-opted independent members to its Audit Committee; b) ensure that the Audit Committee reports directly to Full Council and that this is documented within the Constitution; and c) include quarterly presentation of the Strategic Risk Register to the Audit Committee	Audit Committee to complete a self-assessment of its effectiveness with external independent support which will inform a develop plan for the committee.  Completion of the first annual report from Audit Committee to Full Council.	Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer	September 2025  December 2025	<b>Ongoing.</b> The self-assessment was already in train and was a commitment in the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement. An independent LGA advisor is supporting the committee to complete this.  <b>Ongoing.</b> The outcome of the self assessment will be reflected in the first annual report of the committee and will form a development plan	<b>Complete.</b> Audit Committee agreed the recommendations in principle and their formal response at its meeting in September 2025.  <b>Complete.</b> The first annual report of the Audit Committee was reported to the October 2025 meeting of Full Council.	<b>Complete.</b> A development plan is in delivery and progress monitored by the Committee.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
							for the Committee.		
				The Risk Register is reported to the Audit Committee every 6 months and to Overview and Scrutiny Board every quarter.		N/a already in place every 6 months.	<b>Complete.</b>		
21	Delivering Best Value	Governance	(EFS) We raise Recommendation 4 encouraging the council to explore options for growing report writing skills at the lower levels of the organisation.	A revised report format will be considered by Leadership team in April, alongside recommendations to refresh report writing support.	Monitoring Officer	Complete	<b>Complete.</b> A new report format has been developed, and engagement has been undertaken to identify report writing needs.		
22	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(EFS) We have raised Recommendation 9 that the council should more clearly articulate its approach to mitigating treasury management risks in the Treasury Management Strategy. From our review we have not identified any significant risk that the council is exposed to but recommend a clearer articulation of the steps taken to mitigate these risks.	Improved TMS taken to Council in February 2025 but further work will be undertaken to strengthen this within a revised TMS half year update to be presented to Executive.	Section 151 Officer	October 2025  Reprofiled to December 2025 following identification of an error with the target date – the update should follow on from completion of the mid-year financial update being provided to Executive.	Ongoing.	<b>In progress.</b> This will be reported to the December meeting of Executive, following consideration of the Quarter Two Financial Outturn report at Executive.	<b>Complete.</b> Agreed by Executive in February 2026.
23a	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(EFS) We have raised Recommendation 11 that the council should progress	The Council has already commenced a soft market testing exercise with	Director of Regeneration	Completion of soft market testing by March 2025	Ongoing. Soft market testing complete. The initial stage has been completed	<b>Completed.</b> Soft market testing has been completed.	

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
			external management arrangements for its remaining commercial properties in a timely manner.	Cushman and Wakefield to assess the extent of the commercial portfolio that could be outsourced. Once completed this will inform next steps with a realistic proposal for outsourcing based on market appetite.		Subject to findings, development of an appropriate approach to outsourcing will be undertaken during 2025/26 if the business case is supportive of that outcome.	to assess the appropriateness of arrangements to ensure it is assured that it has the correct management arrangements in place, which included consideration of external management.  The Council is currently continuing to review and refine its options appraisal in relation to this to ensure it has a sustainable medium term approach to commercial property management.		
23b				Follow up action: Go live with the new arrangements. Timing is subject to the internal approval processes of the appointed company	Director of Regeneration	April 2026 onwards	n/a	<b>Ongoing.</b> This is a new action agreed following completion of the soft market testing action above. An agreement has now been signed and is on track to go live before the target date.	<b>Complete.</b> Approval has been granted, and arrangements are now in place.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
24	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(EFS) We have raised Recommendation 12 that the council should continue to review and consider the most prudent approach to calculating MRP whilst considering both short-term and long-term impacts on the revenue budget.	The Council will review the MRP methodology and consider the effects on the MTFP as part of the 2026/7 budget setting process.	Section 151 Officer	March 2026	<b>Ongoing.</b> This will be considered within the review of the MTFP as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process which will articulate the Council's considered approach, taking into account the costs of changes in approach, risks and the impact on the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.	<b>Ongoing.</b> See the June 2025 update which sets out the approach that is underway.	<b>Ongoing.</b> To be reviewed following changes in government funding methodologies. The Council's approach is set out in the Treasury Management Strategy considered by Executive in February 2026.  This will be kept under review as part of the Council's strong oversight and management of its budget.
25	Delivering Best Value	Continuous Improvement	(EFS) We raise Recommendation 16 that the council should develop a comprehensive change management framework that includes clear objectives, key performance indicators, and a culture of continuous improvement. There should be integrated accountability structures that clearly define roles and responsibilities for transformation initiatives. We also raise Recommendation 17 for the council to	Develop and finalise a Change Management Framework  Not applicable as already actions in place to address this within the CIP	Section 151 Officer	December 2025	<b>Ongoing.</b> This will be picked up by the new Strategic Lead for Transformation to put in place a coherent approach to transformation that includes change management.	<b>Ongoing.</b> Will likely be reprofiled with a realistic target date by the incoming strategic lead for Transformation once appointed.	Action cancelled. Replaced by the Council's revised approach to business change and continuous improvement.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
			engage with stakeholders, including employees, residents, and partners, to build support for transformative initiatives and ensure alignment with broader community goals. The council should ensure all stakeholders are aligned with the transformation agenda through effective communication and engagement strategies.						
26	All	All	(EFS) The Council have put in place an improvement plan to address the recommendations within the Care Quality Commission (CQC) report on the Council's Adult Social Care services that was issued in February 2025.	Submit quarterly reports to Department of Health and Social Care following consideration of those items by the People Scrutiny Panel.	Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration	Ongoing from September 2025 on a quarterly basis (revised from May 2025)	<b>Ongoing.</b> The outcome of the inspection was reported to People Scrutiny Panel in March 2025 The first progress report is now due to go to the Committee in September 2025.	<b>Ongoing.</b> Quarterly update submitted to the Department of Health and Social Care on 21 August 2025, following consideration by the People Scrutiny Panel. The report outlines continued progress against the Adult Social Care Directorate Improvement Plan, aligned to CQC findings. Governance is in place via the Directorate Improvement Board chaired by the Director of Adult Social Care, with escalation routes to	<b>Complete.</b> The Adult Social Care Directorate Improvement Programme continues to progress well, with monthly monitoring through the Improvement Programme Board and quarterly reports submitted to the Department of Health and Social Care throughout 2025. These reports demonstrated sustained improvements against the CQC-related actions, leading DHSC to de-escalate the Council from formal monitoring. This

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update	October 2025 update	January 2026 update
								the Leadership Management Team (LMT). A process is currently underway with the Department of Health and Social Care, through Partners in Care and Health to assess whether government oversight can be reduced if they are comfortable with the Council's progress to date, direction of travel and pace of change which would be a very positive endorsement of the Council's approach.	reflects strong governance, a clear direction of travel, and confidence in Middlesbrough's ongoing delivery of the Adult Social Care Improvement Plan
27	Delivering Best Value	Continuous Improvement, Use of Resources and Leadership	(CQC) The CQC inspectors identified concerns that there was not much of a corporate view of adult social care performance data.	Refresh and reestablish a performance management cycle beyond the strategic level, to embed a 'golden thread' of Performance Management from the Council Plan down to departmental level.	Director of Legal and Governance Services – Transferred to Chief Executive following the Senior Management Review.	December 2025 – reprofiled to April 2026	<b>Ongoing.</b> A proposed way forward has been developed. A revised Performance Management Policy will be brought forward for Member decision in December 2025.	<b>Ongoing.</b>	<b>Ongoing.</b> This has been reprofiled slightly to allow the policy and supporting framework to reflect the transition from Transformation to Continuous Improvement that is set out in the Council Plan report at this Executive.

Source key:

CPC	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge January 2025 recommendations
MIIAB	Former Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board recommendations
EFS	Exceptional Financial Support Grant Thornton review
CQC	Adult Social Care, Care Quality Commission inspection February 2025



# LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Middlesbrough Council

12-13 November 2025

Feedback

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## 1. Introduction

Middlesbrough Council (Middlesbrough) undertook a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) during 13 – 16 January 2025 and promptly published the full report with an action plan.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the CPC process. Taking place approximately ten months after the CPC, it is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- receive feedback from peers on the early progress made by the council against the CPC recommendations and the council's RAG rated CPC Action Plan
- consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs
- discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date.

The LGA would like to thank to Middlesbrough for their commitment to sector led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

## 2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at Middlesbrough took place onsite on 12-13 November 2025.

The Progress Review focussed on each of the recommendations from the CPC, under the following theme headings:

- strategic vision and partnerships
- governance and continuous improvement
- financial resilience and transformation.

For this Progress Review, the following members of the original CPC team were involved:

- Andrew Lewis, Chief Executive of Liverpool City Council

- Mayor Paul Dennett, Mayor of Salford and Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Cecilie Booth, Former Executive Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer at Peterborough City Council
- Helen Edwards, Director of Law, Governance, Audit (Monitoring Officer), West Midlands Combined Authority
- Frances Marshall, LGA Senior Regional Adviser and Challenge Manager.

### 3. Progress Review - Feedback

This report provides a summary of the peer team's reflections on progress made by Middlesbrough against each of the CPC's 12 recommendations since January 2025. It is not an exhaustive record of activity undertaken by Middlesbrough since the CPC, or in response to the CPC. It is a high-level summary of the peer team's reflections based on Middlesbrough's provided pre-reading, pre-engagement meetings, fieldwork meetings and a reflections roundtable. The following summary reflects the peer team's views as fellow local government councillors and officers and is focused solely on the CPC original 12 recommendations.

#### Executive summary

At the time of the CPC in January 2025, Middlesbrough was emerging from a challenging period marked by weaknesses in corporate governance, culture, and financial management. Since then, the council has maintained a positive trajectory, responding to its CPC recommendations as part of a wide-ranging continuous improvement programme. Of the 23 actions in the CPC action plan, 57 percent were reported as complete, 43 percent were on track, and none were yet to progress, demonstrating a strong commitment to delivery and continuous improvement.

Peers noted that the organisational environment now felt calmer and more confident, with stronger relationships between councillors and officers. Staff and councillors described the council as happier, more outward-looking, and focused on delivering for communities rather than solely on internal improvement. This shift is evident in Middlesbrough's ongoing work to strengthen its partnership approach and improve

external relationships, with a huge opportunity to bring residents, communities, and partners together to shape and become advocates for Middlesbrough. While progress so far is encouraging, the council recognises that defining a clear vision for Middlesbrough, and achieving long-term impact, will take time. As part of this, continuing to build stronger relationships with the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) as a driver of investment and delivery, is critical.

Financial resilience remains a key priority for Middlesbrough, particularly with national trends of inflationary and service pressures. However, the council has made notable progress: reserves are now less fragile, financial controls have strengthened, and national funding decisions are expected to create modest headroom in the medium-term budget. Despite these improvements, the council continues to face significant financial risks, including a forecast year end overspend of £7.8m at quarter two, driven by demand pressures. The position is managed through a range of contingencies included in the base budget, and as a result, the reported overspend position is reduced to £1.8m. The peer team encouraged Middlesbrough to maintain a prudent and long-term financial approach and move away from centrally controlled contingency budgets for 2026/27 budget, to budget holder accountability. This would promote shared ownership of the financial challenge across the council and avoid overly optimistic assumptions about medium-term risks, which remain significant.

Overall, the peer team commended the council's progress since the CPC and underscored the importance of sustaining its focus on embedding improvements while pursuing its long-term ambition to address deep-rooted economic and social challenges.

## Theme 1: Strategic Vision and Partnerships

### Recommendations

- Develop – in co-production with communities, partners and businesses - a **long-term vision for the borough** that is inclusive, practical and deliverable.
- Redefine Middlesbrough’s **strategic approach to partnership working** based on principles of timely and meaningful collaboration, co-design and with common purpose.

Middlesbrough has launched a programme to reset its partnership approach and lay the foundations for co-producing a shared long-term vision for the borough. Central to this is the newly established Place Leaders Partnership, which brings together a diverse range of local partners committed to the town. Although still in its early stages, the partnership has begun work on co-designing a multi-generational vision for the borough. There is a huge opportunity to bring residents, communities, and partners together to shape both the vision and its execution, with systems leadership and genuine co-production that produces something more than the sum of its parts.

The peer team commended the Place Leaders Partnership approach, highlighting its wide stakeholder engagement and the council’s careful reflection on its role in shaping this work. Close collaboration with TVCA on development of the town vision will be vital so local ambitions and regional strategies complement and strengthen each other. The emerging vision - centred on young people and extending into early adulthood - signals long-term aspirations for the town and provides a solid foundation for lasting change. This marks a significant shift from a period of internal focus to Middlesbrough taking an active role as the convenor of place.

Building on this momentum, peers encouraged Middlesbrough to explore how the vision can meaningfully engage the public and influence partners’ policy and investment decisions. This will help ensure resources across the town are aligned to deliver the shared ambition for place. Peers also highlighted national developments that could unlock new opportunities for growth, supporting Middlesbrough to turn this vision into tangible outcomes and build wider confidence in the area’s future. These

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included attracting national and regional investment, accelerating housing plans (including those at Middlehaven), capitalising on industrial strategy initiatives, and developing a pro-growth reputation with business. The Pride in Place funding is a clear example of this, offering opportunities to further develop and operationalise Middlesbrough's neighbourhood model and contribute to its emerging vision.

### Recommendations

- Develop and seek to **strengthen relationships with TVCA and its other member authorities** to maximise the potential for Middlesbrough and the wider Tees Valley at the forefront of devolution.
- Seek to **resolve the hiatus with the Middlesbrough Development Corporation (MDC)** to unlock its potential as a powerful mechanism for integrating the resources and assets of the council and TVCA, to achieve a shared plan for the town.

Concerted efforts have been made to strengthen relationships with TVCA and address what the peer challenge identified as a hiatus with the MDC. Actions have included proactive engagement by both authorities' political and officer leadership, support for Middlesbrough's Mayor in his TVCA Cabinet role, and direct assistance from Middlesbrough officers to share learning to help TVCA respond to its best value notice.

Peers heard that encouraging progress has been made in resetting relationships and moving toward a more collaborative approach with more proactive engagement now a feature of relationships, and Middlesbrough's Mayor investing significant energy and demonstrating a genuine commitment to this. Significant challenges remain however around partnership arrangements and governance. All parties recognise that building long-term trust will take time and that further work is needed to achieve this. Peers emphasised the importance of Middlesbrough continuing to strengthen this partnership, grounded in a shared purpose and joint enterprise to deliver outcomes for the council and its communities. It is positive that more proactive engagement is now a feature of relations, though continued further development is

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needed and recognised by all.

While there remain issues to be resolved about the MDC's role and focus, steps have been taken to resolve the hiatus with the MDC, including a pragmatic approach to asset transfers, a strong relationship with the new chief operating officer, and better joint working between Middlesbrough and TVCA's officer team. While these are positive developments, the core challenge persists: the MDC is not yet realising its potential to drive investment and delivery in the town. TVCA and Middlesbrough are however now better placed to resolve these issues in partnership.

#### Recommendation

- Develop and embed a comprehensive approach to **strengthening equality, diversity, and inclusion**, including workforce and democratic representation within strategy, policy, and service delivery; and community engagement.

The council has taken multiple steps to strengthen its approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion, including a refreshed people strategy and work plan designed to improve workforce representation through community engagement. It has updated its impact assessment policy to better capture poverty impacts, enhanced reporting processes, and plans to refresh its member development programme. These changes are supported by initiatives such as a new neighbourhood working model, expanded community engagement capacity, the reintroduction of work-placements for school pupils, and community cohesion activity.

Peers acknowledged the breadth of work undertaken and highlighted the positive feedback they had heard about the council's new neighbourhood working model and its potential to strengthen community engagement. Maintaining this strong focus will be key to turning these measures into lasting impact. Peers highlight the importance of embedding inclusion throughout, particularly in the context of community tensions, ensuring that all voices and needs are represented and the workforce is supported.

## Theme 2: Governance and continuous improvement

### Recommendations

- Establish a **locally owned assurance and improvement approach** for Middlesbrough post the voluntary improvement Board to provide the council, partners and residents with assurance and support, and embed and sustain continuous improvement.
- Review and **strengthen Middlesbrough's Internal Audit arrangements** and provision to ensure they are fit for purpose and adequately support the council's continuous improvement and assurance journey.
- **Review the Overview & Scrutiny Committee arrangements** to ensure they support robust and impactful scrutiny for the future aligned with best practice.

Middlesbrough has taken decisive steps to strengthen governance and embed continuous improvement through a comprehensive plan that consolidates recommendations from inspections, reviews, and key activities into a single structured framework. Grounded in the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government's best value guidance, the plan is subject to regular political oversight and scrutiny and fully integrated into senior leadership processes.

Peers commended the council's live, iterative improvement cycle, which they heard is contributing to progress, while observing that maintaining momentum will demand ongoing focus and reinforcement.

### Recommendation

- Review and **strengthen Middlesbrough's Internal Audit arrangements** and provision to ensure they are fit for purpose and adequately support MBC's continuous improvement and assurance journey.

Progress in reviewing and strengthening Middlesbrough's internal audit arrangements has moved more slowly than other areas. While the need to reset the relationship with the current provider and increase audit days is recognised,

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discussions on a revised approach remain ongoing. Given internal audit's pivotal role in assurance and improvement, the peer team encouraged Middlesbrough to accelerate action to use audit as a catalyst for organisational change. Doing so could deliver quick wins, lead to tangible improvements, and enhance assurance and confidence in the council's delivery.

Recommendation

- **Review the Overview & Scrutiny Committee arrangements** to ensure they support robust and impactful scrutiny for the future aligned with best practice.

Measures to strengthen overview and scrutiny have been implemented following a review of Middlesbrough's arrangements in March 2025. This has led to a stronger emphasis on pre-decision scrutiny and the creation of an additional committee to increase capacity to scrutinise the key service areas of children's and adults.

The peer team heard that these changes have been welcomed by councillors and have strengthened the ability to scrutinise critical and high spend service areas. However, further work will be required to ensure these changes bed-in effectively and deliver the intended outcomes.

### Recommendations

- **Support councillors further** in their roles around:
  - a. supporting the Executive in its roles with administrative support and training
  - b. addressing issues with Councillor Gateway system
  - c. the timings of meetings
  - d. promoting and encouraging good councillor conduct, including on digital platforms.
- Continue to **improve member and officer relationships** with clear understanding of their respective roles, responsibilities and promoting good behaviours.

Improving relationships between councillors and officers has been a long-standing priority for Middlesbrough, with significant work already undertaken. Since the CPC, this focus has continued through ongoing training and development for both groups, supported by regular organisational 'temperature checks' via staff surveys.

Those the peer team spoke with described the council as more stable, confident, and calm, reflecting a wider cultural shift. Improved councillor–officer relationships were seen as central to this change, alongside the benefits of a more settled leadership and investment in corporate capacity. Councillors were generally complimentary about officers, and staff survey results and engagement levels almost doubled which indicate improvements in organisational culture compared to the previous year. Whilst this is a positive step, the relatively low response rate shows there is more to do to engage more staff. Continuing to build trust and maintain momentum will be key to sustaining these gains and embedding cultural change.

The peer team heard that additional resource for the Executive has made a significant difference and been widely welcomed. While councillor training sessions have been delivered, attendance has been mixed, suggesting further work is needed

to boost participation and ensure sessions are supported by appropriate technology and accessible to all. The council has made efforts to offer flexible meeting times. The peer team noted however that a more practical balance may be needed between flexibility and sustainability.

The team welcomed initial work planned to facilitate cross-party discussions on the issue of councillors' allowances. To further strengthen support for all councillors, the council should also consider ensuring that an outcome of this ongoing engagement is a cross-party position on councillors' allowances to reflect the time, skills, and responsibilities required for the role. This would help ensure the role remains accessible to people from all backgrounds and recognises the significant commitment involved. Similarly, recognition of appropriate remuneration and support for independent persons on the Audit Committee is important, given the critical skills they bring for assurance and risk management.

Middlesbrough has made concerted efforts to improve the Councillor Gateway casework system and support councillors in using it. However, many councillors continue to express frustrations with its operation. Resolving these issues will be crucial to enabling councillors to access information efficiently and fulfil their roles effectively. The peer team welcomed the decision to restart the gateway project board to address these concerns and encouraged Middlesbrough to identify whether the challenges stem from culture, training, service prioritisation, or back-office processes, and implement targeted solutions accordingly.

### Theme 3: Financial resilience and transformation

#### Recommendation

- Bring further **rigour to financial planning and management** to support savings delivery and financial resilience by:
  - reviewing the MTFP assumptions and updating on a quarterly basis, with clear plans for managing demand and delivering savings reported in monthly budget reports
  - embedding understanding and ownership of the financial position with budget holders to ensure the on-going delivery of transformation, savings and efficiencies
  - supporting the Executive to own and shape the overall financial position, ensure that scrutiny and audit oversight is effective, transparent, and supports understanding beyond the council with key partners and the public
  - reviewing pay scales to support recruitment and retention of key staff, linked to workforce and succession planning, with the right balance of internal promotion and external appointments.

Middlesbrough has implemented a series of measures to strengthen the rigour of its financial planning and management. These include reviewing MTFP assumptions and incorporating changes in quarterly executive reports, providing financial training for councillors, monthly budget reports for leadership team review, completing an audit committee self-assessment against Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) good governance guidance, and progressing recruitment of a pay and reward specialist to support workforce retention. Plans to integrate performance and finance reporting are on hold while the council resets its performance management approach, with a new framework expected from 2026/27.

The peer team heard that these measures have delivered a more consistent level of financial grip across the council, resulting in greater confidence in financial

management. Greater stability in the finance team was evident resulting from successful recruitments, and with steps underway to build future capacity. Financial resilience has also been strengthened by replenishing useable and earmarked reserves from £13.2m to £17.9m, and with plans in place to increase this to £30m. This is good news, with maintaining a sound level of reserves to meet unexpected in-year pressures - particularly in social care - essential. A better-than-historic settlement has created scope for modest headroom in the medium-term budget.

Peers commended Middlesbrough's considerable efforts and progress achieved, while stressing the need for continued caution and sustained focus on financial resilience. Despite improvements, risks remain in the medium-term, with a current budget overspend of £4.5m at quarter one and significant demand pressures, particularly in children's services. Careful management and maintaining healthy reserves will be essential to mitigate unexpected pressures. The council is managing the overspend using contingency budgets and reported confidence in addressing these pressures, with the reported forecast overspend at quarter two reduced to £1.8m, however the reduced forecast is mainly due to the release of contingencies. While it is prudent for the Section 151 Officer to keep a tight grip on the overall financial position, the use of built-in contingencies reduces accountability and responsibility at the budget-holder level. The peer team encouraged Middlesbrough to reduce reliance on contingencies and adopt a more sustainable, transparent approach that gives budget holders greater responsibility and clarity on the financial position. For the 2026/27 budget process, budgets should be accurately allocated to holders, who are accountable for managing their budgets within the set envelope without central control. Peers also highlighted scope to strengthen budget scrutiny to ensure oversight remains robust as pressures evolve.

The peer team recognised that the potential headroom in the budget represents a pivotal opportunity for the council. However, given the sustained financial pressures on local authorities, particularly those serving areas with higher socio-economic need, it would be prudent to avoid overly optimistic assumptions about the future. The council will want to invest this headroom carefully, focusing on key community challenges while safeguarding long-term financial sustainability.

### Recommendation

- **Reframe your approach to transformation**, shifting from tactical savings during a crisis to long term financial sustainability and continuous improvement to deliver better outcomes by:
  - undertaking a cross-council reset and relaunch of the transformation priorities alongside the Council Plan and council values, underpinned by strong leadership, a robust communications and engagement plan, and an organisational development strategy
  - creating a senior transformation officer to lead consolidate and prioritise the current programme, identify new areas for transformation, and track progress and delivery of desired outcomes
  - reviewing capacity to deliver Middlesbrough's transformation ambitions, including corporate services and supporting data and analysis, to ensure that all relevant services are adequately resourced to support transformation outcomes.

Middlesbrough has made some headway in advancing its transformation programme. Progress however has been slower than expected due to challenges in recruiting a strategic lead for transformation. Progress to date includes reviewing and relaunching the transformation approach to align with council plan priorities, alongside resource investment and recruitment of additional roles. Middlesbrough has also strengthened its leadership capacity around digital and housing through the appointment of a new head of digital and ICT, and head of strategic housing.

The peer team noted that recruitment difficulties in appointing a dedicated lead officer had understandably slowed momentum. With significant pressures on demand-led services and a fragile financial context, maintaining a clear and sustained focus on transformation - particularly in adults' and children's services - will be critical to meeting these challenges and securing financial sustainability. As the council enters a new phase of its transformation journey, shifting to embed continuous

improvement, this is a timely opportunity to reassess the capacity and leadership needed to deliver its transformation objectives.

## 4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Middlesbrough for undertaking an LGA CPC Progress Review. We commend Middlesbrough for the positive response to the CPC and were pleased to see evidence of its positive contribution to the council's ongoing improvement journey.

We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on the areas identified for development and improvement, and we would be happy to discuss this.

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